

Remembering Dr V Kurien

The great visionary, mentor & leader

Anecdotes, experiences & stories



**NATIONAL
DAIRY
DEVELOPMENT
BOARD**

Remembering Dr V Kurien – The great visionary, mentor and leader





Foreword

Dr Verghese Kurien, our Founder Chairman was a visionary who orchestrated the white revolution that transformed the lives of millions of small and marginal farmers across the country. He was a great institution builder who established many institutions to bring about sustainable change in the lives of farmers. Dr Kurien believed that we cannot develop men and women until and unless we place the instruments of development in their hands, involve them in the process of such development and create structures that they themselves can command.

Dr Kurien chose to lead a life dedicated to the farmers of this country, putting aside the desire to pursue other options even though it was not the career that he envisioned. He was convinced that if the stark imbalance between the cities and villages, between industry and agriculture in our country was to be corrected, it was necessary that farmers be organized. He therefore decided to dedicate his life in service of the farmers. Dr Kurien believed that money is not the only satisfaction that one can seek, there are several other forms of satisfaction. Remaining an employee of farmers all his life gave greatest pleasure and satisfaction for Dr Kurien. It was this decision of Dr Kurien, which created history and transformed the life of millions of small and marginal farmers.

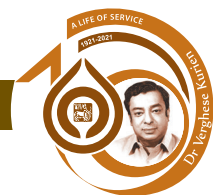
Dr Kurien was epitome of ethical leadership and throughout his life practised integrity as the greatest value. He was fierce protector of autonomy of NDDB and all the institutions created by him and defended them with all his might. He was fearless in his disposition and never compromised on the interest of farmers. He had unwavering faith in the capability of farmers to take decisions that best served their interest and believed that the role of professionals was to support them in taking professional decisions.

Dr Kurien's contribution to this nation is unparalleled. No other leader had such profound impact on rural economy, especially on small and marginal farmers, as Dr Kurien had. It is therefore befitting that we all re-dedicate ourselves to everything that he stood for and ensure that the values he cherished in life and the principles he stood for are staunchly protected and imbibed by all of us.

As a part of birth centenary celebrations of our Founder Chairman, we are pleased to bring out this Memoir, with rich memories, stories and anecdotes shared by stalwarts – who walked the uncharted path with him while permanently changing the destiny of millions of farmers. We are thankful to all the NDDBians and professionals from Dairy Co-operatives who have contributed and made this memoir a rich compilation. A special word of thanks to Shri Shailendra Kumar, former Senior General Manager, NDDB for his heart warming support in sharing contributions of many stalwarts who have written about their memories on his website www.vrikshamandir.com.

(Meenesh Shah)
Chairman

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Working in NDDB with Dr Kurien was a Blessing A ringside view of the Operation Flood programme

Dr Ram Aneja, former Managing Director, NDDB

Before India liberalized its economy and before IT professionals made India matter in the world, the most successful story of the country was its achievement in the dairy sector. From huge dependence on imports of milk powder, India became self-sufficient in milk and even started exporting significant amounts of milk powder and other milk products. Our milk production increased from 20 million tons in the 'seventies to 80 million tons in the 'nineties and 200 million tons now.

Who was responsible for this revolution? Surely the farmers produced the milk but the one person who more or less singlehandedly organized millions of small and marginal farmers into very successful organizations was Dr Verghese Kurien.

The cooperatives Dr Kurien organized on the basis of the Anand Pattern have been responsible for the increase in milk production. They run the entire gamut of milk production – collecting and paying for it twice a day, every day; processing this milk for marketing; and conserving the seasonal surpluses into milk powder. They have conclusively proved that cooperatives do work as democratic institutions in India.

Dr Kurien always emphasized that democracy in Delhi needs to be underpinned by democracy at the grassroots level in the villages. He told his detractors that he knew more than they did about the limitations of the cooperatives, since he had worked for the cooperatives all his life and had great faith in the goodness and generosity of the rural people. He was a firm believer in the unmatched combination of farmers and professionals working together to serve the rural areas.

Before Dr Kurien came on the scene, the task of dairy development was being organized by the Milk Commissioners of the States. The Government Milk Schemes soon found that it was easier to use cheap imported milk powder to supply milk in the urban areas of the country than it was to pay higher prices for locally produced milk.

All these milk schemes like Delhi, Bombay and Calcutta began with good intentions. To start with they procured milk at the prevailing prices and sold at market prices. As producer prices rose, consumer prices needed to be raised. It was cheaper to bring in imported milk powder as it enabled the politicians to keep the urban prices low. As a result India became dependent on imported milk powder and the urban market was destroyed for the rural milk producers.

Vested Interests

Also the Milk Commissioners had vested interests in the sector. Dr Kurien often stated that there were no Milk Commissioners in Denmark, the Netherlands and New Zealand



but there was plenty of milk in those countries. The Milk Commissioners in India opposed the setting up of cooperatives tooth and nail. While the Cooperative Commissioners welcomed the idea initially, they opposed it later as Dr Kurien did not want political interference in the working of these cooperatives.

An incident comes to mind: The Chief Minister (CM) of Rajasthan, Barkatullah Khan, did not agree on autonomy being given to the milk cooperatives as required under the Anand Pattern. He told Dr Kurien that Rajasthan farmers were not as capable of managing their businesses as Gujarat farmers. Dr Kurien then asked him as to how the CM was elected. The CM mentioned that he was elected from the Jodhpur Rural constituency. Dr Kurien then retorted by saying if these people were capable of electing their CM, how come they were unable to manage their own little milk business. That convinced the CM and he agreed to the Anand Pattern of Cooperatives.

Dr Kurien wanted major changes in the antiquated cooperative laws, which gave the executive all powers to supersede cooperatives. When this matter went to the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, she also questioned Dr Kurien on the capabilities of our farmers to manage big business. Dr Kurien is then reported to have told her that she was talking like the British who had said that they would give Indians their freedom when they were ready. Dr Kurien went to the extent of telling her that because of our desire to govern ourselves we had fought for independence. If we wanted good governance then maybe we should call Lord Mountbatten back.

Dr Kurien was a missionary. He was fond of saying that for him replicating the Anand Pattern was a mission and like missionaries who know only one way to God, he would support all those who follow the Anand Pattern of Milk Cooperatives. Those who followed would reach God and those who kept on discussing (like many States did and are still debating) will keep on discussing. The results are there for all to see — States like Gujarat, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and some others did well. The others are still discussing.

Fearless *Karmyogi*

Dr Kurien was a fearless *karmyogi* and he never asked for anything for himself. I recall when Jagjivan Ram wanted a private dairy to be funded under Operation Flood (OF), Dr Kurien's blunt reply was that it could not be done. Surely the Minister had wanted him to be sacked but could not because of the Prime Minister's support for Dr Kurien.

Dr Kurien was blunt with the bureaucrats as well. Early in the implementation of OF, PN Haksar, a Member of the Planning Commission, asked as to why the project was not being implemented speedily. Dr Kurien's reply was that the delay was because of him. Haksar was taken aback and wanted Dr Kurien to explain. Dr Kurien then mentioned that the approval for the setting up of the Mother Dairy in Delhi had been pending with the Planning Commission for a long time.

Haksar then asked for the concerned Joint Secretary to explain the delay. The Joint Secretary stated that he had some questions on the subject, like the use of stainless steel in

the milk tanks at the bulk vending machines. At that time steel was being imported and we were short of foreign exchange. Dr Kurien then told the Joint Secretary that if he had questions why did he not ask?

Dr Kurien then asked him why the Planning Commission did not object to the use of stainless steel in the toilets in the Indian Railways. Why was he objecting to its use in milk booths now?

Dr Kurien then informed him that the tanks in question were to be made of fiberglass reinforced plastic.

Dr Kurien was just as blunt with the politicians. The Minister of Civil Supplies in the early 'eighties, V C Shukla, was withholding approval for NDDB's Vegetable Oil and Oilseeds Project. The same minister's staff had telephoned the General Manager of the Mother Dairy in Delhi to take back a driver who had been dismissed in a disciplinary case. Dr Kurien met the minister and explained to him as to how the project in question would make India self-sufficient in edible oils on the lines of the milk project. The minister did not seem to be interested in Dr Kurien's explanation and nonchalantly told him to leave the proposal and he would go through it. Dr Kurien then asked him if there was anything on the minister's mind, hoping the minister would raise the question of the dismissed driver. The minister did not say anything.

Dr Kurien then said, "Sir there is this question of a driver that you want to be taken back. Before I came to you I explained to the General Manager of the Mother Dairy that we need your approval to this Rs 300 crore project."

"So why can you not take this driver back?"

Dr Kurien's reply was that the driver in question was dismissed on serious charges. He went to the court and lost his case. He said, "If I take him back, I will lose the moral authority to run the Mother Dairy. My staff expects me to support them and that driver will not be taken back. You can now do whatever you want with the proposal before or after reading it."

The minister was taken aback and slumped in his chair and said, "So what they say about you is true. I will support you but you will have to pay a price".

Dr Kurien quipped back, "What is the price, Sir"?

The minister said, "You will have to help me manage the Asian Games".

The next day we were at the Management Committee meeting of the Asian Games and I recall Eswaran, the then Finance Secretary, asking Dr Kurien as to what he was doing at the meeting. Dr Kurien replied, "Maybe you have to drink milk to jump higher and run faster".

The Minister did support the oilseeds project.



High Stakes

Dr Kurien played hard games with high stakes. When he presented NDDDB's Market Intervention Operation to make India self-sufficient in edible oils in five years, Rajiv Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, questioned his targets by saying that you took 20 years in milk, how can you do this in five years.

Dr Kurien's reply was, "This time we are asking for a complete package of policy and powers to implement it".

"But what are the guarantees?" quipped the Prime Minister.

"Our heads", replied Dr Kurien. He got what he asked for and made the country self sufficient in edible oils in three years instead of five.

The dairy sector in India has had some great people contribute to its growth. Some are very well known names like Dr P Bhattacharya, D N Khurody, Dr S C Ray, H M Dalaya, V H Shah, A K Ray Chaudhuri, G M Jhala, Dr Amrita Patel, etc. All of them have contributed very significantly. However the contributions of many more have largely gone unnoticed. Some, that come to my mind are the contributions made by N Rajagopal, the then Joint Secretary (Dairy Development), Government of India; G V K Rao the then Secretary to the Government of India, Ministry of Agriculture; and, T N Seshan who was later the Cabinet Secretary and the Election Commissioner of India.

Rajagopal was a great human being. When I sought an appointment with him to sort out many problems that we had at the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), he gave me a date to meet him at Krishi Bhavan. On reaching his office I was told that he was not feeling well and was on leave. Since I had spoken to him the previous evening and everything seemed to be fine, I decided to go to his home. He greeted me at the door and explained his sick leave. It was to ensure that we had all the time needed to sort out the many issues. His explanation was that how could you get much done at the office!

Rajagopal would take a bus to MoA as he had just enough money for petrol to take him for his morning game of tennis. When Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister, visited Anand for the first Convocation of IRMA in 1982, we had to tell her as to how poorly our policy makers were paid. That discussion raised the salaries of officers and a car was then provided to take them to the office and back. Eventually Rajagopal resigned from the IAS as he could not take the heavy bias the then Minister of Agriculture had against the NDDDB.

G V K Rao should get full credit for the milk and silk revolution in Karnataka. When I first met him he was the Development Commissioner of Karnataka. The Government of Karnataka had prepared a usual project for dairy development at the behest of the Government of India for funding by the World Bank. Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh had also prepared similar projects, as these states were not covered by OF. The World Bank then asked these three States to rework these projects on the lines of OF. I had assisted these states in reformulating these projects.

T N Seshan was the Agriculture Secretary of Tamil Nadu in the 'seventies. On the recommendation of his staff, he termed the Perspective Plan prepared for Tamil Nadu under OF as unacceptable. When we asked him the basis of his rejection of the Plan, his officers produced figures of current milk production in Tamil Nadu that equaled the targets the Perspective Plan had projected at the end of the plan.

We sought a day more to have a relook at the figures. The next day we produced another set of figures (provided earlier by the same officers) to say that the current milk production was already 50 per cent more than the figure quoted by Seshan the previous day. We then congratulated Seshan on having already achieved the targets under the programme and suggested that perhaps Tamil Nadu did not need any more milk production.

We then explained that the Perspective Plan had already raised the issue of non-reliability of the milk production data and a component of the Plan was to collect the required data on a scientific basis and then aim at increasing milk production by 50 per cent over the period of implementation of the Plan. TN Seshan is a big man and saw the folly of the arguments put up by his staff and promptly approved the Plan and everything that was required to implement it.

In later years Seshan was very supportive of the Market Intervention Operation (MIO) in oilseeds and vegetable oils as the Cabinet Secretary and Chairman of the Empowered Committee on the Technology Mission on Oilseeds. He was a great motivator in getting tough when things got rough.

Great Challenge

Preparing perspective plans for dairy development in the participating states was a great challenge in the absence of reliable data. We were able to achieve this task with the cooperation of the state agencies. We were also able to set up a comprehensive Management Information System (MIS) that helped us monitor the implementation of these plans and operate the National Milk Grid. It was very satisfying to see the emergence of the milk grid right before our eyes. This would not have been possible without the hard work put in by Shailendra Kumar and R K Nagar.

The setting up of the Sugam Dairy at Baroda and the many processes developed for the industrial manufacture of shrikhand, gulabjamun, khoa, paneer etc reinforced the place of our indigenous dairy products in the dairy sector. We also helped develop mini milk testers that are a great success. All this was possible because of the support received from professionals like M N Vyas, P V Mathew, Dr S V Pilkhane and T N Murti.

Dr Kurien was honest to the core and ran a squeaky clean organization. There was a driver who was asked to speed up as there was some emergency. The driver got fined Rs 50 by the police for speeding. He went to the Chief Executive of NDDB and explained as to how he was asked to speed. The Chief Executive asked the driver to get a bill from a



garage for the amount of the fine and submit it to the administration. The Administrator passed the bill but reported the matter to the Chairman, Dr Kurien. Next day there was a public notice on the official Notice Board informing that the driver was fined one rupee, the Administrator another rupee and the Chief Executive was fined Rs 48 to raise the money that could not be charged to NDDB. A clear message to all concerned.

Once there was a case of a senior officer having made some money. Dr Kurien called him and told him to leave immediately or he would pull him apart limb by limb. That reminds me of an incident where T N Seshan told an officer that Dr Kurien was not a doctor but a surgeon because he only chops.

Dr Kurien had a great sense of humor. When the Queen of Netherlands visited Anand, pointing to the stylized Mohenjo-Daro bull that is the logo of the NDDB, she jokingly called him an MCP. Dr Kurien quipped: “Madam, no bull no milk”.

For those who worked for Dr Kurien, it was a blessing to have worked for a mission that sought to alleviate rural poverty and enable our poor to manage their own affairs. Dr Kurien was truly a Bharat Ratna. This needs to be celebrated every day with a glass of wholesome milk. He worked hard with a missionary zeal and made India proud. May his spirit live in us all and motivate us to rededicate ourselves to the service of the nation and derive the satisfaction that Dr Kurien derived in working for both milk producers and consumers.

Persuasive Powers

There never was and never will be another Verghese Kurien who reigned like a Colossus over the dairy industry of India for over 50. He had the authority to rule over the industry because of his intense knowledge of the sector, his faith in the capacity of the rural milk producers and his selfless dedication to their cause. This was further strengthened by his persuasive powers to mobilize professionals from all walks of life to devote themselves to the noble cause of alleviating rural poverty. He used his immense charm to muster the support of policy makers as their contribution to this noble cause.

I first met Dr Kurien in 1957 when I was a trainee at the Amul Dairy at Anand in 1957. One late evening I ran into him at the gate of the dairy plant while he was waiting for a local politician to arrive so that he could show him the Amul Dairy. He enquired about our in-plant training and told me that he was waiting for a politician who wanted to see the dairy at that late hour before he boarded the Saurashtra Janata Express at Anand as he wanted to see as to how this dairy was helping the poor milk producers. Much later, Dr Kurien would often quote Jawahar Lal Nehru: “We were ordinary people and it was the nobility of the cause (fighting for the freedom of India) that rubbed on us and people thought that we were great, while we were ordinary people”. I was terribly impressed by Dr Kurien’s personality and charm.

A year later he was our examiner on dairy engineering and gave us all an assignment to draw a plan for a rural dairy plant. I had fever and therefore I finished the assignment

as quickly as I could, handed over the assignment and went back to the hostel. I was later called back to the examination hall and Dr Kurien pointed out several flaws in my drawing. I was worried until he mentioned to the internal examiner, Sinha, that mine was the best drawing.

In the early 1960s, Amul Dairy was one of the many ways the dairy industry was being developed. Amul grew and evolved as a result of the professionalism of Dr Kurien and the political leadership of Tribhuvandas Patel who was its founder chairman. It was Tribhuvandas Patel who went to Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel to seek relief from the unjust order of the Milk Commissioner of Bombay State that gave Polson Dairy the monopoly right to collect milk from 19 villages around Anand. Sardar Patel then sent Morarji Desai to organize the milk strike that led to the formation of the Kaira District Cooperative Milk Producers' Union Ltd (Amul Dairy). Tribhuvandas Patel and Dr Kurien were jointly awarded the Ramon Magsaysay award in 1963 for 'Community Leadership' for the path-breaking effort to organize dairy farmers into a viable cooperative.

When Dr Kurien needed some initial funds to set up NDDB, it was Amul Dairy under the Chairmanship of Tribhuvandas Patel that provided the initial grant to set up the NDDB campus at Anand. We were fortunate to be at the foundation laying ceremony of the NDDB campus by Tribhuvandas Patel. A mouse appeared from the pit that was dug up for the purpose at the NDDB campus and Tribhuvandas Patel observed that a similar incident had taken place when the Amul Dairy foundation was laid by President Rajendra Prasad. The significance was explained by Tribhuvandas Patel that this was a great blessing and Amul never stopped growing. He wished the same for NDDB.

Till then Milk Colony Model based on Khurody's Aarey Milk Colony had been replicated at Kolkata and Chennai. The Delhi Milk Scheme had started a new trend in large government milk supply schemes. There were also the private dairies concentrating on luxury milk products. The government milk schemes had virtually started a vicious dairy development cycle by resorting to the use of cheap (dumped) imported milk powder that was destroying the urban milk markets for the rural milk producers. When we learnt dairying at Karnal, the teachers would tell us that since the demand for milk was more or less constant throughout the year, we must produce constant supply of milk throughout the year by producing more milk in summer.

Dr Kurien had already realized that the surplus milk produced in winter that could be used in summer by conserving it as milk powder and that we should encourage more milk production even in winter since it was the time that farmers had more crop residues and natural herbage. That led to a much better model for dairy development, one which could flood the cities with rurally produced milk instead of India being dependent on imported cheap milk powder that was impinging on the growth of rural milk production. The era of milk colonies and government run dairies was over and a new king had arrived. It started with the fall of Delhi Milk Scheme which had run into serious managerial troubles. The Agriculture Minister, C Subramaniam, appointed a committee under Dr Kurien to look into the revamping of DMS. The committee took this opportunity



to encourage the Government to relook at the way the sector was being developed. The setting up of the NDDB with most of its members from this Committee indicated the arrival of a new strategy for dairy development.

I joined the NDDB when I was told that its mission was to replicate the Anand model. Dr Michael Halse, who had impressed me at the courses that I attended at IIM Ahmedabad, had himself switched over to the NDDB. I was convinced that replicating the success of Amul Dairy was the way India should be going. Dr Kurien gave me whatever I wanted to join the NDDB and that started a fairy tale for me to work closely with Dr Kurien.

In 1972, I resigned from the NDDB following some false stories being carried to Dr Kurien. He asked me the reason for my leaving and I explained to him how I was disappointed in his listening to all kinds of stories. I told him some plain truths in a most rustic manner as I thought it was a mere exit interview and that he could do nothing to me. Dr Kurien showed that he was a big man and he could take honest criticism. He asked me to repeat the story (and the choice of words that I had used) at the meeting of the Board of NDDB that was being held at that time. I did exactly that and after that he asked the members of the Board to let me go to Canada on study leave and that he wanted me back. He also told the Board that I need not sign any bond to return as he trusted my word. That made me come back.

Great Blessing

Working with Dr Kurien for over 24 years has been a great blessing. He led from the front and was totally committed to the dairy farmers of India and showed the thoroughness that was needed to handle the tremendous challenges that we faced. He was able to muster support from the highest levels in the country and that helped in the successful implementation of OF. His real strength came from the farmers supported by professionals working for them. This is an unbeatable combination. I was lucky to have a ring side seat and watched events unfold as they did to make the country a leader in milk and milk products.

When I went to Karachi to prepare a dairy development plan on behalf of SAARC in 1996, our nodal point was the Industrial Development Bank of Pakistan. The General Manager of the Bank was not very enthusiastic about an Indian Team coming for this purpose. He narrated to us as to how “Indian spies were following him when he went to Delhi for a regional conference”. He said that he was however impressed by the milk booth outside his hotel in Delhi. When he went to see it he became keen to see the Mother Dairy that ran the booth. The Booth Manager then put him in touch with the General Manager of the Mother Dairy in Delhi. The General Manager arranged for a car to pick him up and show him the Mother Dairy and he was most impressed with it. He then mentioned to us that he could not believe the name of the General Manager as it turned out to be a Muslim gentleman by the name of N A Shaikh.

I then mentioned to him that Shaikh was an engineer who started his career as an apprentice engineer at the NDDB and that we had a Chairman, Dr V Kurien, who was a Christian. When he learnt that I used to be the Managing Director of the same NDDB, he warmed up and did everything that he could, to help with the SAARC study which recommended the setting up of a Mother Dairy for Karachi.

I hope the new generation, with all the technology that they now have at their disposal, will further our age-old values of honesty, sense of purpose, hard work and compassion. The guiding principle has to be “Love All, Serve All”.

Poverty in India is going to harm the rich almost as much as the misery it causes the poor. The rich are refusing to see the reality and are living in virtual bubbles. When the bubbles burst, the reality will dawn on them in the most horrific manner.



The Humble Giant

Shri RK Nagar, former Senior General Manager, NDDDB

(Source: <https://www.vrikshamandir.com>)

We all know late Shri Tribhuvandas Patel or Tribhuvan kaka as the founder Chairman of Amul.

We all have heard the story of a shy young man sitting in a corner having picked up by Sardar Patel to lead the cooperative movement of the dairy farmers of Kheda district against the exploitation by the private dairy that monopolised milk procurement in Kheda district to supply butter to the British army.

We also know how he led Amul for 35 years as its Chairman and how he retained Dr. Kurien as the professional manager of the nascent cooperative way back in 1949.

In Dr. Kurien's own words, 'By agreeing to my somewhat outrageous demand of a princely salary of Rs. 600 per month, he tied me to Amul and the dairy cooperative movement for life'.

We also know that by giving Kurien- the professional manager he had hired-total freedom to manage the affairs of the business, he set an example for the cooperative leadership to keep within its legitimate role-that of motivating the farmers and strengthen the cooperative movement while leaving day to day business to the professionals.

In the process, well before the application of the modern management principles in agricultural sector, he set an outstanding example of the relationship between the cooperative and business leaders to follow for the success of a cooperative business venture.

Although he won the Ramon Magsaysay award with Dr Kurien and late Shri DN Khurody in 1963 for community leadership, he always kept a low profile. When he learnt that the government of India is not funding Dr. Kurien, the Chairman of the newly formed NDDDB to run his office (an institution that was created by none other than the late prime minister Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri himself to replicate Dairy cooperatives on Amul model throughout India) he not only funded it but also provided technical manpower support from Amul, knowing fully well that one day these cooperatives will stand in competition with Amul. He truly believed that the cooperative dairy movement should benefit not just the milk producers of Gujarat but also benefit all the dairy farmers of India. He believed that the NDDDB must be supported to transform the Indian dairy sector, and he was always willing to go an extra mile to hold the hand of both the NDDDB and the cooperatives.

In fact, I feel it was this outstanding leadership quality of Tribhuvan Kaka that gave India its future leader for the dairy sector in Dr. Verghese Kurien. I call Tribhuvan Kaka a giant of a leader because only a leader like him could make another giant of a leader- Dr. Kurien.



In the picture above Shri Tribhuvandas K Patel is seen along with Dr. V.Kurien and Shri HM Dalaya

Much of it had happened well before I joined NDDDB in 1969. So, when I heard about his role in creation of Amul and supporting NDDDB, I desired to meet this great man at least once.

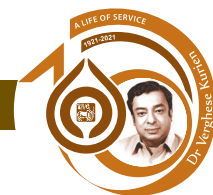
But I never got a chance to meet and interact with him. I only saw him sometimes in NDDDB office when he came to meet Dr. Kurien and Mike to discuss about Tribhuvandas Foundation- an institution that was created from the purse he received on retirement after 35 years of the Chairmanship of Amul.

Although one such chance did get created when as head of planning, I managed an inland fisheries pilot project. We had hired NK Saxena, who had specialised in fisheries to oversee the pilot project.

The idea of the pilot was to explore if a village level fisheries cooperative or an alternate institutional structure can be created to utilise the village pond – a common village property to generate income to be used by the village panchayat for the development of the village.

We were to utilise the outcome of this experiment to evolve a project that would have covered almost 500 village ponds of Kheda district and could be implemented by the Tribhuvandas Foundation.

Working with TF was in accordance with one of the six action teams that Mike had listed in TF's proposal under which the village youth were to be involved in some income generating activities using the common village resource.



In the pilot project, we were to integrate both the village pond and surrounding land. Pond to grow fish and the land to grow a combination of trees that would bring regular annual income to the village panchayat. A team from amongst poorest of the resource poor of the village was to be formed and trained to manage the activity. We broadly planned to use the income on such actions that would benefit the entire village like, a drinking water trough for the animals, improve drainage and use it after filtration for irrigation and thus prevent contamination of village pond, maintain village school building, build toilets and improve drinking water facilities in schools to name a few.

We were working on the premise that these activities can be easily integrated under the umbrella of the TF. Each village panchayat was, of course, to decide its own priorities and allocate funds.

Our experimental village was Waghasi. We leased the village pond, successfully raised sweet water fish and learnt that a village level fisheries cooperative is not feasible. Since village pond is a common property, its size and income generation potential was too limited to support more than 10-12 families. A cooperative formed with restricted membership will always be vulnerable and will hardly stand a chance to survive. We therefore thought of an alternate institutional arrangement wherein the TF was to have a more important role.

I accordingly prepared a blue print outlining the activities that could be successfully undertaken on the common property resource that would generate the income for the village without forming a vulnerable village level institution. The CEO of the foundation suggested that since fisheries is planned as a key activity, we should present the entire plan to Tribhuvan Kaka and seek his approval. I was therefore eagerly looking forward to a chance not only to meet him but also to get his views on the proposal. This was my chance to meet the great man.

But it didn't happen that way. The day we took the first harvest to campus for sale-some 200 kg of live fresh water fish, straight out of pond and kept in water till sale, the entire lot of campus residents from the eastern part of country swarmed the sale counter and the entire lot was sold out in just half an hour. I guess they are bestowed with a nose that can smell fish from ten miles.

Moreover, the prices at which it was sold (same as prevalent market price in Anand) I am sure they won't even get to smell the sweet water fish in Kolkata. The freshness of the fish made the early birds pick bulk of it.

There, however were two unfortunate buyers. Both had moved from Delhi office few months back. When their spouses reached the sale counter around 530 pm all the fish was gone and a helpless Saxena could only apologise. By 5.45 pm, I was no longer handling the pilot project. "Why is the planning fellow handling a project which is for the farmer's organisation to implement" was the question asked. Anyway, I lost my only chance to meet Kaka that very moment.

In June 1986, I was transferred to Bangalore. By this time Tribhuvan kaka was, I guess in his 80's and he was rarely coming to NDBF office. Therefore any chance of meeting him

in person was exceedingly slim. I had also assumed that from now on I will move from one region to another and that in this lifetime, I wouldn't have a chance to meet him. I almost forgot about it and abandoned the idea of meeting him ever.

But in June 1990 I was transferred back to Anand.

This time to handle MIO and Dhara. As such I had to travel to Ahmedabad quite often for meetings at GROFED.

One day same time in 1993, to my utter surprise Shri Chatwal, who was managing guest relations called and asked me, "Nagar, you have requisitioned a car to go to Ahmedabad tomorrow morning. Would it be possible for you to give a lift to Tribhuvan Kaka? He has some 3-4 hours work there with a cooperative institution".

I just couldn't believe it. I was finally going to meet the person I have adored for such a long time. I told Chatwal Saab, "please give me his number. It will be an honour and I will call Kaka right away to fix the time for pick up".

I called Kaka and heard a very humble voice from the other end, "Nagar Saab, I am Tribhuvandas. I learn that you are going to Ahmedabad tomorrow. If it is not inconvenient, can I get a lift to Ahmedabad? I have some work there".

I replied, "Kaka, please don't request, just order". Back came the reply in a still humbler voice, "no Nagar Saab, it is not befitting for me to order, I can only request". His humility was choking me. I asked, "Kaka, when can I come and pick you". "Don't come to pick me, it will be inconvenient for you to come to this congested part of the town. I will meet you" and he indicated a meeting point that was quite far from his house in his reply.

"No Kaka, I will come as near your house as possible and then send my driver to your house. Till then, please, please don't leave your house". He reluctantly agreed to my proposal.

Next day, I picked him at the appointment time and we travelled together to and from Ahmedabad. I had finally met the humble giant I had adored from the very first day I heard the story of how he retained Dr. Kurien at a princely salary of Rs 600 per month.

Now just imagine what would have happened had he allowed Dr. Kurien to go? I guess, there wouldn't have been THE AMUL that became a model to replicate and without that model, there wouldn't have been the NDDDB, IRMA, THE DAIRY COOPERATIVES ACROSS THE COUNTRY and scores of other associated institutions.

Do we who had a chance to work in this network of institutions ever realise that we owe our existence in this field to this humble giant - Tribhuvandas K Patel?

I feel deeply grateful to him for creating an opportunity for me to be a part of this great movement.

Meeting Dr Kurien and Dr Michael Halse; my interview for a job at NDDB

Shri Shailendra Kumar, former Senior General Manager, NDDB

(Source: <https://www.vrikshamandir.com>)

From my village to Anand

I met Dr. V. Kurien in November, 1967 for the first time, thanks to Prof VK Gupta and Dr. Michael Halse (Mike) who were both then working at the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad (IIMA). I had known uncle Gupta as he and my father were friends and both had earlier worked at the Extension Education Institute at Nilokheri in the erstwhile Punjab. After completing my Masters degree I was looking for a job. It was uncle Gupta who gave me my first job as an investigator and statistician in 1967 for a month on daily wages of a princely sum of Rs 15 per day! I had written about my meeting with Mike and Dr. V Kurien and that led to my getting employment with National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) for the 7th edition of Dairy India Yearbook, (<http://www.dairyindia.in>). The text is reproduced below.

The Matchless Duo Who Nurtured Talent, Dr. V Kurien and Dr. Michael Halse

Dr Kurien demanded and Mike created the environment.

In 1967, at the Ford Foundation Guest House in New Delhi I first met Dr Michael Halse. I was working on a consulting project for Prof. V K Gupta of the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad (IIMA) as a Research Assistant on a contract basis. Mike came into the room, looked at me, smiled and said "Hello". He was the first foreigner, a white man, who just looked at me and said "Hello". I stood up from my chair and said "Hello" in return.

I had studied in my village and home town university at Gorakhpur. I was not good at spoken or written English. My post graduate degree was in Mathematics. But the lack of fluency in English was not an impediment in our conversing and delivering on the role expectations.



Mike was at that time coordinating a consulting project that IIMA was doing for a Mumbai-based group which later resulted in the formation of the Protein Foods Association of India (<http://www.pfndai.com/history.htm>). I had done a house-to-house sample survey on expenditure patterns of lower middle class families for Prof Gupta. I was analysing the data collected. There were no computers those days and Mike had an electronic calculator. I was asked to come to the Ford Foundation Guest House and use it. Mike saw me working when we greeted each other.

After a couple of days Prof Gupta told me that Mike wanted to meet me. My contract of one month was getting over and when Prof Gupta indicated that Mike wanted to meet me and that there was a possibility of getting additional work. I was tempted, hopeful but also anxious. How would I communicate with him? What if I am unable to understand his accent? What if I am not able to answer the questions he asks?

When I met Mike I did not realise how the time passed. He wanted me to do secondary research, look at National Sample Survey data of various rounds and summarise trends in expenditure group wise actual reported expenses on various items like food (cereals, milk and milk products, meat etc), education, medicine, etc. I found in him an extremely patient person, passionate about the work that he was doing and someone with an amazing capacity to explain things.

As luck would have it, in my forays into libraries of various Government organisations I was able to gather valuable information and published data in a very short time. The data compilation and analysis work that I did under Mike's supervision turned out to be full of learning. He encouraged me to explore newer ways of looking at the same data set. I had done a paper in statistics as part of my Master's degree. However, it was for the first time that I was faced with real data to play around with and look at from different perspectives through interpolation, extrapolation and propose possible conclusions for further discussions and investigations. The learning was immense. I still preserve the signed testimonial that Mike gave me post my first assignment for him in 1967. He gives me more credit than I deserved.

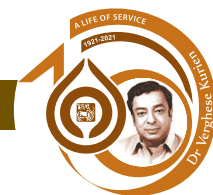
It was Mike's nature to create conditions which allowed "talent" to grow naturally and to nurture the talent through exploratory questions by not putting too tight deadlines. However, when things came to a crunch and a deadline was to be met, he had no hesitation in taking things in his own hands to complete the same while giving the credit to his assistants and associates.

Journey with Dr Kurien

At our first meeting, Mike enquired about my family background. He was impressed with my work and gave me more assignments. He wanted me to pursue studies. Looking at my family background, he offered to pay for my studies. Then there was a long gap.

On 24th November 1967, I was happy to receive a telegram from Mike (I still have it in original) asking me to meet Dr Kurien about the possibility of working with him.

I met Dr Kurien in the office of the then Joint Commissioner (Dairy Development), Government of India, Gopinath.



Dr Kurien interviewed me for over one hour. But it was an antithesis of what an interview ought to be. I was asked very few questions. I was a listener. Dr Kurien was such a story teller.

Dr Kurien spoke at length about his “Leadership Journey”. I was totally absorbed listening to the articulation of the “vision” on the future of dairying in India that he wove through the narrative of his life, work and dreams. The vision was about enabling producers of agricultural commodities find their rightful place by coming together and move into the centre of any effort to integrate production, procurement, processing, marketing of milk and of inputs for milk production enhancement.

He talked about his education, his work at Tata Steel, his deputation to the Government Dairy Facility at Anand in order to fulfill the commitments made for obtaining a scholarship in lieu of his education at Michigan State University, meeting Tribhuvandas Patel, the founder Chairman of Amul, agreeing to work for the Kaira District Cooperative Milk Producers Union and finding a cause to live by and work for.

Dr Kurien spoke about the formation of the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) in 1965 following the visit of Lal Bahadur Shastri, the then Prime Minister of India, on 31 October 1964 to Anand. Emphasis in his narrative changed to the importance and need to create organisations owned and commanded by producers of agricultural commodities, managed by professionals, organisations that are sensitive to the needs and responsive to the aspirations of producer members.

I would later realise that these were ideas central to the conceptualisation, planning and implementation of Operation Flood which was launched in 1970. Mike assisted Dr Kurien to give a larger plan and shape to a programme to realise the vision Dr Kurien had enunciated.

Dr Kurien went on. “We are looking for young men and women with integrity, commitment and loyalty to the cause of the organisation that they work for. If they have some technical qualifications that are good, that is fine. Otherwise we will train them”.

He stopped and said, “Mike, told me that you are looking for a job?”

I said, “Yes sir”.

“What is your educational qualification?”

I told him that I had a Master of Science Degree in Mathematics.

“Well then send in an application” he said.

I asked, “Which post I should apply for”.

“Any suitable post!”

“Whom should my application be addressed to?”

“Write to the Chairman NDDB.”

“What is the address?”

“If you write V. Kurien, Anand, it would reach me. But you better address it to the Chairman, NDDB, Anand”.

I forgot that I was being interviewed for a job. I asked, “Sir, What is your age? He said “Forty five. Why?”

“Sir, you seem to have achieved so much in such a short period of time”.

I went out of the room and walked to the bus stand to get back home. The conversation I had just had left a deep impression on me. I did not know who Dr Kurien was apart from whatever he had just shared with me. I had heard only of Amul as manufacturers of butter who had taken away a large chunk of the market share of Polson’s—the other leading manufacturer of butter.

On my return journey I was day dreaming about having a regular job which was so difficult to get those days. I was born in a small village in a farming family. We had more than 35 acres of land. We had more than 25 animals, bullocks, cows, buffaloes, etc. We had plenty of farm workers. We had plenty to eat and also share with others. However, when it came to “cash” we were always short. I had seen abject poverty and deprivation prevalent in my part of the country before 1960s.

It was not difficult for me to understand and align with Dr Kurien’s thinking and the vision that he had to put the farmers at the centre of their empowerment and development effort.

The next day when my father arrived back from a tour, I shared with him my discussion with Dr Kurien. He was happy to know that I had met Dr Kurien whom he had met and knew. My father at that time was working for the Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India. I sent in an application. But there was no reply.

Mike met me again in December that year in Delhi and wanted me to join him at IIM Ahmedabad to work again as a contract worker on yet another research project. I was unable to do so due to health reasons.

Later in mid-March 1968, I was able to join Mike in Ahmedabad. He was Ford Foundation Advisor with IIMA working with the Agriculture and Cooperation Group. I worked with Mike and Prof V K Gupta on a case study project “Anand—Bombay Milk Scheme”. It took about a month to complete the research work and involved visits to Mumbai and Anand and gathering both secondary and primary data.

Finally on May 1st, 1968 I was offered and joined NDDB in a regular job. I left on 14 August 2000.

Allow me to share some old nostalgic pictures of my days at Anand. It is strange that I have only a few pictures with Dr Kurien and Mike.

In retrospect, and on the face of it, those years at Anand appear to be full of “Anand” but full of struggle, anxiety, excitement, a sense of achievement and fulfilment on making a small contribution to the country I was born and society I was a part of. Thanks to Dr. Kurien, Mike and all my seniors, peers and team members by being a part of the Team NDDB.



Milestones and Memories of NDDB Campus

Shri Shailendra Kumar, former Senior General Manager, NDDB

(Source: <https://www.vrikshamandir.com>)

When I joined NDDB in 1968 our office was in two story two bed room on each floor flat adjacent to Amul Dairy with a common boundary.



Dr. RP Aneja, Shri PV Mathew and Shailendra in front of NDDB office building 1968



This is the first office building of NDDB. In 1968 this is where I started my professional career.

In 1969, NDDB got the fourth floor of newly built multi-storey Amul Office building.

NDDB was setup in 1965 and actively started operations from 1966 when Shri Bharat Bhatt and Shri PG Gore joined as Apprentice Engineer. Shri VS Behla was the third Apprentice Engineer who joined in 1967, I joined NDDB in 1968 and was 14th Employee.

When Dr Kurien started NDDB, he was the Chairman, Mr. Thakar from Amul Administration Section was the first Secretary. There was another person too Shri Macwan who left before I joined. When I joined Dr SC Ray was the Secretary NDDB. He was succeeded by Shri AK Raychowdhry, Shri GM Jhala, Dr. RP Aneja and Dr (Miss) Amrita Patel (1965-1987). In 1987 NDDB became an institution under an Act of Parliament (NDDB Act 37 of 1987) and Dr. RP Aneja and Dr (Miss) Amrita Patel were made Managing Directors.

The NDDB campus construction was started in late 1968. In 1970, NDDB office was shifted to the campus near Jagnath temple on Khetiwadi Road. Here are some old pictures that I



Amul Administrative building 1969 fourth floor; NDDB MMD Group 1969

In the; standing: Dr. RP Aneja, RK Nagar, MN Vyas, JH Mehta, PV Mathew, Martin, and AA George; sitting: Dr MPG Kurup, Shailendra Palvia, Shailendra Kumar and VG Tulpule

took after office was moved to the campus. Chairman's office, Chummary (now Guest House), Directors Bungalows and the Old Hostel were first to be built.

This office building was one of the first few building constructed in 1970. The cost of this one building alone was at that time Rs.15,00,000 (\$ 21000 at current rate). Dr. V Kurien, Founder Chairman of NDDB, the milk man of India, occupied the ground floor left side corner room from 1970 till 1998.



Chairman's Office Building, NDDB Campus, 1970

The campus was originally conceived as National Dairy Development Centre, however, by the time the construction began it had become National Dairy Development Board. Shri AP Kanvinde a renowned architect conceived the campus. Site Engineers were Shri CJ Kansara and Shri PG Gore.

It was Dr. Kurien's vision and leadership that helped India transform from a net importer of milk products to an exporter and become the largest milk producer of the world before he left NDDB in 1998.

It had its first office in a rented building adjacent to the Amul Dairy at Anand and in late 1969 the NDDB Office was moved to fourth floor of AMUL Office building before moving to the newly built campus in 1970. Ten acre land was initially provided by Government of Gujarat. UNICEF grant of Rs 20,00,000 was used for building a 24 room hostel, chumerry for bachelor employees, a block of 12 one bedroom apartment (D block) for married employees and ten bungalows for senior officers.



Chummary for bachelor officers now Guest House 1970

Dr. Narayan Raj, PV Mathew, RK Nagar and I were given rooms in Chummary in 1970. Later we were shifted to the newly built hostel. I was made the first warden of the Hostel.

When we moved into this office building Operation Flood had just been launched. A lot of base line data was to be collected from field, concept notes and detailed project implementation plans had to be made in time for the first review mission in 1971.

The furniture for the hostel was designed by National Institute of Design.



NDDB old Hostel Dinning Area 1970

I was in the NDDDB hostel in 2015 and again in 2020 and found that most of the chairs, tables and other furniture was still in use.



NDDDB Hostel Reception February 2020 looked same as in 1970

It was very lonely to live in the hostel. Room number one of the hostel which was allotted to me as Warden had separate living room and bedroom and wash room. Nagar, Mathew and Narayan Raj had rooms on the second floor. Twenty four rooms four of us to live. There wasn't much to do after office. Raoji bhai our cook cum man Friday from Mani Bhavan days was employed as a cook. Shri AK Raychaudhary the then Secretary had moved into the quarter A1 but his family hadn't. So he used to eat with us in the hostel. Cost of food was shared among us. Pratap was lone watch man and he would leave the main gate and during the winters make a bonfire to beat the cold. Sitting at a strategic position, where the current car parking space is, he could see the gate and the hostel too. I could see him too from the window of the sitting room of my hostel wardens suite !

It was reassuring as there was a cremation ground just out side the campus, across the road from Jagnath Mahadev temple. In the night it was scary indeed.



Old Hostel and foundations of multi-storeyed office is seen in the picture 1970

Dr Michael Halse

Shri Shailendra Kumar, former Senior General Manager, NDDB

(Source: <https://www.vrikshamandir.com>)

Michael Halse became a member of the founding board of National Dairy Development Board from 1965 to 1968. He was FAO advisor to NDDB from 1968 till 1983. When Operation Flood-I was launched in 1970 he was appointed as the Team Leader of FAO experts assigned to NDDB. He helped conceptualise and set up the Management and Manpower Development Group in 1968. Earlier Mike was a Ford Foundation Advisor to the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad.

He worked with Dr. Vikram Sarabhai, Mr. PL Tandon, Prof Ravi Mathai, Dr Kamla Chowdry and other founding team members of IIM Ahmedabad. He went on a vacation to England shortly after I moved to Anand in late April 1968.

I stayed at Mike's home in Amul Dairy Campus close to Dr Kurien's home for four months till I rented a room in a house across the Amul Dairy campus. Mike returned to India August that year.



Life in Anand

Mike had a house that was full of books. I loved books. But barring a few they all were in English. I loved being given a bedroom full of books. Mike encouraged me to read. He would find time to teach me Economics and also to correct my written English. I could never measure up to his standards.

Mike liked my village background. I had lived and studied in my village and grew up in a joint farming family. This would be a topic of many a discussion post dinner. Mike loved his whisky. I was then a teetotaler. Nevertheless the discussions would go at times past midnight.

At Anand, Mike led a lonely life. He had very few friends. When Mike moved to Anand from Ahmedabad he had a cook Paul and helper Dinesh.

Three Muskatiars

Later Kanti, Bharat and one more (I forget the name) the "Three Muskatiars" joined as Mike's support staff. These three individuals over time became closest to him. He helped them in any which way he could. He supported his helpers to set up a restaurant named "Three Muskatiars" outside the Amul Dairy Complex by supporting them financially,

in the design of the physical facilities, interiors, kitchen and arranging their training in catering and hotel management for them.

Once the restaurant became operational Mike would usually be found in the evenings at the restaurant puffing his cigarette at a corner table.

The antidote to Mike's loneliness was work, work and work. A perfectionist, he always used a pencil and eraser to write draft notes, letters and reports. At times he would type his letters on his typewriter. But the bulk of typing work was done by his Secretary, J H Mehta who also took dictation.

My first and last "Paper"

Mike's ability to edit drafts made by others was phenomenal. In February 1969, before the launch of Operation Flood-I programme, he encouraged me to attend the annual Indian Dairy Conference at Chandigarh. I had to undergo a surgical operation in Delhi. He knew about it and Delhi was en-route to Chandigarh. I had not even completed one year of service but as a special case Dr S C Ray, Secretary (CEO) of NDDB, obtained approval from the Executive Committee of NDDB and I was given leave for a month to be adjusted against the leave that I would be earning on completion of the first year of my service and in future.

Dr Ray said "Shailendra, we cannot pay you for the medical expenses as we do not have any scheme for reimbursing such expenses, but we can think of reimbursing your travel cost if you present a paper at the Indian Dairy Conference in Chandigarh". I had just completed my assignment on sampling of household and analysis of data for the Baroda Milk Market Study. Mike suggested that I write a paper!

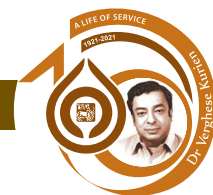
I was hesitant. A lot of effort went into it and finally I wrote a paper describing the sampling methodology and process that we had used for deciding the optimal sample size for a household survey to estimate demand for milk in an urban area. Despite three revisions, I could not produce something that met with Mike's approval. I had to leave for Chandigarh on the appointed day and the paper was not ready. Mike took it upon himself to finalise it. He completely rewrote the text description and sent polygraphed copies of the paper with Dr R P Aneja to Chandigarh. Dr Aneja helped me prepare to present the paper asking questions that might be asked.

I finally did manage to present the paper.

Such acts of encouragement and support to a young employee by seniors was something which taught me a great lesson on how to deal with those who worked with me later in my more than three decades of service with NDDB.

Learning to learn and develop blue prints for future

Mike's inquiring, inquisitive mind, his ability to understand elements that make complex social, technical and ecological systems, fluency in working with both data and mastery with words must have enabled him not only to write for himself but also write important speeches for Dr Kurien and to edit documents outlining policies, programmes and projects



for national, regional and local development related to agriculture and dairying. However, above all was his ability to understand and expand on ideas that Dr Kurien had on any subject.

In 1975 when I became Executive Assistant to Dr Kurien, I would observe Dr Kurien and Mike meet, discuss, and then Mike going out of the room with some bullet points scribbled in his notebook. He would then make a draft which would be discussed and at times changed and at other times it was just approved by Dr Kurien without any change. Mike was the editor for all NDDDB annual reports, project reports, position papers, etc during 1968-1983.

Alignment in thought processes and articulation

Dr Kurien and Mike were two individuals whose thoughts were similar on the future of Dairying in India. Mike was so good at articulating Dr Kurien's thoughts that often he would leave Dr Kurien's room only with some hand written cryptic notes and later produce well thought out position papers, draft letters, project documents, speeches for Dr Kurien. They would together discuss further, make changes and finalise. But need for revisions was minimal.

I was the first person to join NDDDB in the newly created Management and Manpower Development (MMD) Group and the 14th employee of NDDDB. The MMD Group reported to the Secretary (CEO) of NDDDB with professional guidance coming from Mike. Dr R P Aneja, P V Mathew, Dr M P G Kurup, V G Tulpule, R K Nagar and others joined later during 1968 -1970 just in time for the launch of Operation Flood-I.

NDDDB to develop without any support from Government

NDDDB was set up at the behest of the then Prime Minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri as an autonomous independent organisation. Dr V Kurien's vision was to make NDDDB a financially strong organisation by making it provide services to earn funds needed to meet its revenue expenses so that it could be run without any support from Government.

The Engineering Group was the first Group in NDDDB prior to MMD. The Engineering Group earned revenues for NDDDB. In those early years, NDDDB Engineers executed projects for setting up cattle feed plants in Gujarat at Mehsana, Rajkot and Surat.

In 1968 a team of 12 apprentices were selected for Gujarat Agro industries corporation, 4 each in field of Quality, Marketing, Production and Purchase. These plants were later transferred to the Milk Unions of Mehsana, Rajkot and Surat. They were trained by NDDDB with help and support of Amul. The conceptualisation of training design for core competencies was that of Mike. It involved secondment of trainees to Amul, theoretical training in management and practical training in their actual field by buying and selling cattle feed. Mehsana union was selling 60 % of the plant capacity even before the plant was commissioned. So, it was viable even before start. They also worked on expansion of Sumul Dairy at Surat. NDDDB Engineers were supported by the Projects Division of Amul under Shri V H Shah. The fees earned from project execution was the earning for NDDDB.

Earn and learn

MMD on the other hand at that time was a net spender. MMD Group was involved in learning, researching, gathering data, analysing and planning for projects and programmes for dairy development in the country. We had in Dr Aneja one of the most outstanding dairy technologists. Dr Kurup was our resource for animal husbandry and related matters. Nagar was a young economist with a sharp eye for data interpretation and perspective building. Mathew came from the IIMA and was our man on problem solving on managerial issues but his heart was in marketing. Tulpule Sab was a hands-on dairy technologist with vast experience. In all, it was a compact multi-disciplinary group. I was the data cruncher cum researcher.

This was made possible by the work done by the Engineering Group. NDDDB engineers did projects and NDDDB charged a fee on project conceptualisation, design, purchase of equipment and erection. In the initial phases, MMD was seen, at least among the younger group not so senior staff, as a group which was just spending and not contributing to the kitty of money needed to run the organisation.

One of the first jobs that I did with Mathew, who was the second person to join MMD, was to do a supply study to estimate milk production in rural Vadodara and a demand study to estimate demand of milk in Vadodara city. These were learning expeditions for the young ones like us who had just been recruited into NDDDB.

Later these learnings became the foundations on which the entire effort to produce Blue Books for the first evaluation mission of Operation Flood-I was launched under Mike's supervision and guidance. For Operation Flood-I, there were 18 identified milksheds across India and so "Supply Studies" were done in 57 District to help identify 18 Anand's to be setup under Operation Flood-I. Since the four metro cities were to be major milk markets under Operation Flood-I, four "Demand Studies" were conducted in Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and Madras.

NDDDB carried out a "feasibility" report for the proposed Barauni Dairy in 1969. I assisted Mike in data collection analysis and at times acted as interpreter when Mike would conduct interviews in the area. Mike and Dr Aneja (who had recently joined) developed models for data analysis and created the first blue print for doing feasibility studies. We experimented and learnt collecting and analysing data from primary and secondary sources on production and procurement, making projections, working out product price mix's and financial analysis.

Operation Flood

When I joined NDDDB our office was in two storey two bed room flat adjacent to Amul Dairy with a common boundary. In 1969, NDDDB got the fourth floor of newly built multi-storey Amul Office building. The NDDDB campus construction was started in late 68 or may be in 1969, I don't remember. In 1970 NDDDB office was shifted to the campus near Jagnath temple on Khetiwadi Road. Here are some old pictures that I took after office was moved to the campus. Chairman's office, Chummery (now Guest House), Directors Bungalows and the Old Hostel were first to be built.



Operation Flood-I was a project which was originally planned for a duration of five years but had to be extended to ten years. This was a project under the leadership and guidance of Dr Kurien, shaped by his team comprising perhaps the best professional minds in the field of dairying at that time, H M Dalaya (Dairy Technology), V H Shah (Dairy Engineer), Dr R P Aneja (Dairy Technology & Economics) and Dr M P G Kurup (Animal Husbandry). And Michael Halse as Advisor !

This was followed by Operation Flood-II launched in 1980. In 1978-79, NDDB came out with a project to restructure the edible oil sector and create Amul type producers' cooperatives for oilseed growers. I was inducted into the Oilseeds Project in 1979 and headed this function till 1987. Mike was involved in conceptualising this project as well.

The first International Dairy Congress to be held in a developing country took place in New Delhi in 1974. It was again the genius of Dr Kurien and his team that did the conceptualisation, planning and implementation. Dr (Miss) Amrita Patel was the Secretary General of the Congress. And, behind the scene it was Mike's able writing, editing and producing that worked wonders.

A number of new initiatives took place which resulted in the setting up of institutions and projects like the Institute of Rural Management (IRMA) to provide education and training in the area of Rural Management and the Tribhuvandas Foundation (a rural health project in conjunction with milk producers cooperatives).

Some others like the rural electrification project did not see the light of the day and got bogged down in red tape of Government approvals and lack of political will.

Separation and Meeting again

In 1983, Mike went away to Sri Lanka where he worked for the World Bank and we lost touch with him. He approached me when he was very sick and hospitalised. He was rescued, his pension from FAO restored and he was taken to his home in the UK. He visited Anand for a short stint in 1995.

We lost Mike again when he left Anand in 1995-96 to work in Kenya. We found that Mike was living in one of the most crowded slums of Nairobi. He was not in touch with his family. His sister wrote to me and through a friend, Thomas Thevarkad (First batch IRMA) who was a student of Mike we located Mike in Nairobi. He was taken to England where he passed away.

The year 2000 was most difficult and sad for me.

That is the year I left NDDB and Anand too to begin a new third phase of my life!

From my village in Gorakhpur to Anand and then I moved to Gurgaon ...



A plot to bar milk of all species other than cows for the international dairy trade

Dr NK Chawla, former Executive Director, NDDB

International standards for global trade for all foods including milk products come under the purview of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) of the WHO. The CAC has appointed International Dairy Federation (IDF) as its Advisor for formulation of the draft standards on milk and milk products for a token approval by the CAC Committee.

As per the bye laws of the IDF, all member countries are required to constitute a National Committee to liaise/coordinate with the IDF and participate in its meetings. Dr. Kurien appointed me as Secretary of the India National Committee of the IDF in 1995.

Almost soon on my taking over, NDDB received a bunch of draft International Standards for various milk products from the IDF on behalf of the CAC. One of the clauses in all draft standards stated that for International Dairy Trade milk from cows only shall be used. In other words milk from all the species such as buffaloes, goats, sheep and camels would stand barred from the International Dairy Trade. This draft had us seething with anger since in India buffaloes are major contributors of national milk production.

I phoned Dr. Kurien and asked for an appointment to discuss some urgent IDF matter. Dr. Kurien said "Chawla come over immediately". He asked Dr. Amrita Patel to join. When Dr. Kurien learnt about the gravity of the matter, he got furious and said, "Chawla – fight it out until we win the battle."

Dr. RP Aneja, Former Managing Director had attended previous meetings of the IDF in 1994. When he returned he briefed Dr. Kurien and some senior NDDB officers (including myself). He said that he was shocked to note that one of the items for discussion was how India's fat increasing production of Buffalo Milk was one of the threats to the World Dairy Trade. Though Dr. Aneja strongly argued against it, but some powerful milk producing countries wished to proceed ahead with their hidden agenda.

Since 1995, whosoever attended IDF meetings on behalf of the NDDB including myself, argued that due to various technological developments which have since taken place, buffalo milk was as good as cow milk for the international dairy trade but without any success.

In the meantime, the concerned draft standards moved from first draft to final stage for consideration by the IDF Sub-Committee for milk products (which was a proxy for CAC of the WHO).

For NDDB, it was no longer a battle but a war.

Not only buffalo milk producing countries, but other countries that were producing milk from any other mammals such as goats, sheep and camels were also likely to get affected by the proposed standard.

Fortunately NDDB had not only a reservoir of technical/research data on technological developments of buffalo milk for manufacture of milk products such as milk powder, butter, various types of cheeses, condensed milk, etc. but had also gained sufficient evidence in commercial production of all these milk products from buffalo milk. Research papers from NDRI, Karnal on the subject were also procured.

Bandopadhyaya and Ravindra Kumar, young Scientists from our R&D Division assisted me in making my final presentation at the next IDF Meeting for which I had got permission from the then President of the IDF with whom we had developed very cordial relations.

In International forums like IDF, only proposals supported by a majority of delegates are accepted. I worked out a strategy and made friends with the delegations from France, Switzerland, China, Iran, Iraq, South Africa, USA, Canada etc., to support India's proposal as a quid pro for support to their proposals at the IDF meetings well before the next IDF Technical Sessions and International Dairy Congress in Iceland.

I made a very comprehensive power point presentation highlighting various technological developments which have since taken place on buffalo milk for use in the manufacture of various milk products including commercial production of milk powder, butter, condensed milk and various varieties of cheeses such as Cheddar, Gouda, Emental etc. which were originally made from cow's milk. I also presented Acid Profile of buffalo milk versus Holstein Friesian and Jersey cow's milk. I said if you look at acid profiles, Jersey cows are closer to buffalo than Holstein Friesian. Would you therefore, bar Jersey cows milk too and restrict international trade of milk products made only from some select breeds of cows.

I further pointed out that even the definition of milk by the IDF states that 'milk is a secretion from the mammary glands of all the domesticated mammals', arguing therefore that how can milk from buffalo, goats, sheep and camels be discriminated when they also fall in the category of domesticated animals as per IDF definition of milk.

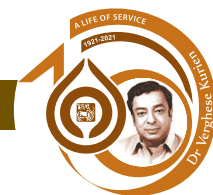
As soon as my presentation ended some ten countries supported India's proposal. No country stood up to oppose India's proposal.

I enquired from the Chairman if India's proposal was accepted by the Committee and pleaded that current discrimination against species other than cows be removed with immediate effect. The Chairman said empathetically that only the Sub Committee for Milk and Milk Products was competent to take a decision on this matter.

I and my colleague not only staged a walk out from the meeting but I also stated that until this discrimination continued India would boycott all future meeting of the IDF. Immediately Chairman of the Committee reported this matter to the President, IDF.

This was followed by a meeting called by the President where I and the Chairman of the Committee were present.

It was agreed that India's proposal would be discussed at the next meeting of the Sub Committee for milk products and India would attend the meeting as an Invitee since India was not a member of the Sub Committee. This meeting was convened shortly thereafter and India's proposal was strongly argued and finally accepted at this Sub Committee. This victory happened after a long drawn battle of 4 years.



Who Checkmated Whom

Dr NK Chawla, former Executive Director, NDDB

Operation Flood, world's largest dairy development programme was implemented in three phases. The final evaluation of Operation Flood-I (1970 – 1980) was undertaken by a World Food Programme & European Economic Community Mission in 1981.

Dr. V Kurien, Chairman, NDDB was informed by the Government of India, the dates of visit of the Mission for terminal evaluation of Operation Flood-I. Dr. Kurien spoke to the concerned Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture and insisted that since it is the final evaluation of Operation Flood-I a representative from Indian Dairy Corporation/ National Dairy Development Board should be a shadow member of the Mission to facilitate Mission's visits to the selected Operation Flood sites and provide to the Mission members, wherever, information possible on the spot itself. Both Government of India as well as the World Food Programme agreed to his proposal. Dr. Kurien proposed my name as a shadow member of the Evaluation Mission.

Evaluation Mission comprised Dr. Jasiowroski (Director of Agricultural Research Institute, Poland) as the Leader, Mr. Dawson, Director, World Food Programme, as the Deputy Leader, Dr. Mogens Jul and Mr. Twomy as members. Both Dr. Jul and Mr. Twomy were members of the previous Evaluation Mission and were very familiar with the Operation Flood-I Project.

Before the Mission arrived in Delhi, we had a few internal meetings at Anand to prepare ourselves with answers to every possible question which may be asked and in particular those which various critics of Operation Flood namely Dr. Claude Alvares, Dr. Shanti George, Dr. Bavisker etc., had raised in their papers.

I was advised to stay in the same Hotel where other Mission Members were booked for better coordination.

Evaluation Mission on its arrival in Delhi first of all called on Secretary (Agriculture) at Krishi Bhavan. At this meeting itinerary of the Mission was discussed in detail.

Mr. Dawson drew attention of the Secretary (Agriculture) to the strong criticism of Operation Flood which had appeared in Indian print media and he said that the Evaluation Mission would like to examine if the criticism was true or false. Though Dr. Jasiorowski was the official Leader, Mr. Dawson seemed to be calling all the shots.

First meeting of the Mission was held in the evening at the Hotel before Dinner. I entered the Meeting Room well before time but found that all the members of the Mission were already present and noticed a set of zerox copies of papers with each member.

A cursory glance around convinced me that each member of the team had been provided with a set of papers relating to criticism of Operation Flood by various social scientists.

At this meeting after discussing the itinerary of the mission, Mr. Dawson raised a few questions about criticism of Operation Flood which I answered. Next day a copy of each question asked and NDDDB's reply with facts and figures was provided to each member. This was made a practice throughout the itinerary of the Mission.

The itinerary covered only northern and eastern Operation Flood states as desired by the Mission. Evening meeting was scheduled almost every day. At almost every meeting, Mr. Dawson would raise a few questions about criticism of Operation Flood, which were answered with facts and figures.

After visiting project areas of North, the Mission reached Calcutta. Dr. Kurup, the then Executive Director joined us in the Mission as an observer. Among other visits to the Project Areas, Mission visited Sikkim and its one Cooperative Society at the height of some 13000 feet. The visit was an eye opener as one of the Mission member remarked that if a dairy cooperative society can be successful at such an isolated location it would be successful anywhere in the country. Mission members interacted with the farmers, consumers and a few opinion makers in every project area. Almost all the members, excepting Mr. Dawson seemed to be quite satisfied with their visits as farmers, consumers and opinion makers were found to be happy with Operation Flood everywhere. However, due to Dawson factor no member seemed prepared to make any remarks in favour of Operation Flood.

Meeting at the Calcutta Hotel where we were staying was scheduled after dinner. Dr. Kurup and I had dinner in our room as we tried to work out our strategy for the meeting. Possibility of a favourable evaluation report appeared to both of us to be very bleak due to Dawson influence over all the members.

We joined the Mission meeting. Dr. Jasiorowski in his opening remarks said that this was the last meeting before leaving for Anand and asked the members to ask whatever question they have. He asked Mr. Dawson for his remarks. Mr. Dawson appeared to be in drunk state and remarked that Dr. Kurien was a bastard and I am going to teach him a lesson. The moment Mr. Dawson made this remark, I said we can't accept such a derogatory remark against Dr. Kurien for whom we have the highest regard. I added that we are therefore, walking out of this meeting. Dr. Kurup and I got up to leave the meeting room. Dr. Jasiorowski and Mr. Dawson tried their best to persuade us to stay back but we didn't agreed. As soon as we reached our room we phoned Dr. Kurien and informed him of this incidence. He said, Chawla you have done the right thing.

As soon as we reached Anand, Mr. Dawson wanted to meet Dr. Kurien to apologize for his remarks, but Dr. Kurien refused to meet him. However, Dr. Kurien agreed to meet Dr. Jasiorowski, who conveyed apology of Mr. Dawson to Dr. Kurien. But Dr. Kurien told him clearly that what is said once can't be unsaid. Due to change in the attitude of Mr. Dawson all other members of the Mission expressed their opinion frankly in favour of the project in their internal meeting at Anand on the basis of their findings during visits to the project areas.



Soon thereafter the Mission presented its findings to Dr. Kurien which was not only very positive but also said that all the criticism of Operation Food-I was not only misplaced, but also had no basis.

I had to accompany the Mission to Delhi as final report of the Mission was to be presented to the Ministry of Agriculture. At Delhi one more meeting of the Mission was held as a few modifications/alterations were proposed by some members. At the end of this meeting, Mr. Dawson presented to me a beautiful gift – a Chess Board made of Sandal Wood. While presenting it Mr. Dawson remarked “we were hoping to checkmate NDDB but we got checkmated”. Next day I met Dr. Kurien at Anand and told him about the gift presented to me for the NDDB. He smiled and said, Chawla you keep it because you deserve it.

Pilgrim's Progress

Dr MPG Kurup, former Executive Director, NDDB

(Source: <https://www.vrikshamandir.com>)

I started my pilgrimage North in the late sixties not knowing when I set out that it was to be a pilgrimage at all. But it so happened that I was swapped up in a human saga set in motion by a giant among men, called Verghese Kurien. What I recount below are some of the precepts and principles in leading men, doing things and achieving success that I learned as a part of this great movement.

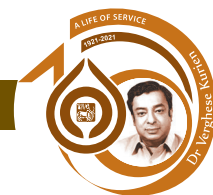
There are only a lucky few who were fortunate enough to work with the legendary milk man of India: Verghese Kurien, a visionary and pragmatist, a rare combination of qualities seldom found in one individual: his head in the clouds, but his feet planted squarely on terra firma. I was one among those lucky few and for almost a quarter of a century with a ring-side seat, just an arm's length away from him, all along. A Leader of men par excellence and a champion of the farmers, he devoted a whole life time to help them shape their destinies and to build for them an empire, vast and powerful, entirely controlled by them through the professionals they employ.

I became a part of this team of professionals led by Verghese Kurien and along the way some of his wisdom rubbed off on us: we learned the tricks of the trade: leadership, man management, team spirit, attention to detail, decisiveness, and above all determination. The rules of the game too were as important as the tricks themselves: integrity – personal as well as professional, fairness, equity, punctuality, speed, prudence and accountability. Competence, efficiency and unflinching loyalty were of course prerequisites to become a part of his team.

Management by delegation: delegation of responsibility and authority was the order of the day: we all learned that to load a man with responsibility and matching authority was the surest way to make him grow. We soon realized that one cannot lead from a crowd: one has to stand upfront to lead. Decision making became for us a matter of the head first and then of the heart as well: it was clear that the path to hell was paved with good intentions! In team building we learned to choose our peers, not the serf: the principle was: choose the one good enough to be your boss!

No other leader has left behind such a vast skill pool of top class professionals and managers, who continue to contribute to nation-building in different sectors of our economy.

Lo and behold! We were soon a bunch of brats: head strong and cock sure, competent and aggressive, ready to take on the world and to hold on our own. We invaded the country with our tasks, teams and projects, changing the way we did business in our country and building enduring edifices as bulwarks against any onslaught of vested interests: and we succeeded all the way to the market, adding value and enhancing returns for our primary



constituents: the farmers in India. And they cheered us on to advance and achieve as never before.

The theme was small holders and their livelihoods: the movement enabled over 10 million marginal and land less households of milk producer members in the cooperative movement to cross the poverty line and to enjoy a far better quality of life, in a sustained and progressively improving rural prosperity ambience. It taught us to look beyond the cow and see the man behind; and work for his welfare. The social capital build up in rural India enabled by the movement resulted in tens of thousands of viable and flourishing community based organizations owned and managed by farmers, institutionalizing their household livestock enterprises, giving them a continuing and sustainable livelihood option.

To me as an individual, the opportunities opened up by the movement were vast and varied, enabling me to become a major player in the development and orchestration of the livestock sector in India, to build and promote a nation-wide input generation network of animal feed mills, frozen semen production stations, bull mother farms, world class laboratories; to be the CEO of the second largest virus vaccine manufacturing plant in the world; and to coordinate and manage an army of professionals: a mixed bag of veterinarians, engineers, scientists, economists, environmentalists, sociologists, agronomists, accountants and administrators. After demitting office in the formal set up the experience and expertise gained over the quarter century I spent working with Dr.Kurien enabled me to become a successful international consultant handling widely varied mix of projects, the National Livestock Policy Perspective for the Government of India and to continue as a Consultant to the World Bank over the past 15 years.

Some say that Kurien is a big Banyan Tree under the shadows of which nothing grows: nothing can be farther from truth. For those of us working with him, it was this shadow that provided the protective umbrella, emboldening us to dare the limits every single day and achieve breakthroughs of personal and group excellence, always shielding us from harm and encouraging us to grow. No other leader has left behind such a vast skill pool of top class professionals and managers, who continue to contribute to nation-building in different sectors of our economy.

Dr V. Kurien – a few memories

Mr. Thomas R Carter, former Senior Advisor, NDDB

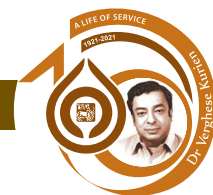
I have lived a very fortunate life, blessed by knowing and working with some truly extraordinary people. First and foremost among these were Dr. Verghese Kurien and the wonderful colleagues that worked with and for him.

I first learned of Dr. Kurien and his work when helping some Peace Corps Volunteers in Raichur District, Karnataka learn more about dairy cooperatives. I believe I might have asked Shri GVK Rao, then the Mysore Development Commissioner, or Dr. A HR Arakeri, then the Director of Agriculture. One or both of them mentioned that the person who knew most about that subject was a man named Kurien who worked with a very successful dairy cooperative in Gujarat. I passed this on to the volunteers who made a trip to Anand. On their return they could not stop saying what a wonderful experience it had been, how exceptional the Kaira cooperative was, and what an extraordinary man was Verghese Kurien. That would have been around 1968 or 1969.

Two or three years later, I was visiting a Peace Corps dairy development training program in Kanota, near Jaipur in Rajasthan. There was an exceptional young training staff member who had been deputed by the Rajasthan Department of Animal Husbandry to work on the program. The young man came up to me and told me with great excitement that he had been selected to work with the National Dairy Development Board. For him, as it was for many young professionals – veterinarians and engineers – the prospect of working with NDDB and Dr. Kurien was a dream come true.

Some years later, in 1982, the Cooperative League of the USA (CLUSA) asked me if I would like to serve as their Representative in India. In the discussions about the position, I learned that CLUSA's major activity in India was a collaboration with NDDB, the Oilseed and Vegetable Oil Project (OVOW) with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) donating 160,000 mt of soybean oil which would be monetized to finance creation of an infrastructure for oilseed growers' cooperatives including modern processing plants. The prospect of meeting Dr. Kurien along with the possibility of returning to India was all it took for me to accept the offer. But then, a week or two before we were scheduled to leave for Delhi, I was called in for a meeting with the CLUSA staff. I was told that there was a very good chance that the project would be ended because of a dispute between the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the National Dairy Development Board. I was given the opportunity to withdraw from the position and assured that something else would be made available. But, the naïve belief that all could be resolved led me to stick with my earlier decision and so my family and I left for India in May of 1982, expecting to spend two or three years.

On arrival I learned that the dispute was not a minor matter. The Inspector General of USAID was insisting – contrary to the signed project agreement – that his staff audit the OVOW. Dr. Kurien, I was told, had refused to allow this both because there was a



signed agreement which called for NDDB's auditor to carry out that responsibility and because Dr. Kurien would not permit a foreign agency's auditor to enter into a potential conflict with India's Comptroller and Auditor General. Ironically the USAID Inspector General's insistence arose because the USAID official who had signed the agreement had subsequently been found to have profited by the sale of PL 480 commodities in two other countries. The IG's assumption was that anyone who had an agreement with that gentleman was probably involved in a corrupt activity.

During my first few weeks it was evident to me that there was absolutely no question about the integrity of NDDB and Dr. Kurien. Both were not only clean, they took pride in their integrity and honesty.

Over the next two months or so, several high-ranking USAID officials visited. On one occasion I had a conversation with the individual and mentioned that Dr. Kurien had made a lot of enemies in the political, bureaucratic and business circles and that if there were the slightest blemish in his leadership of NDDB, he would have been attacked mercilessly. Yet, while many vested interests attacked Operation Flood and the Oilseed Project, not a single allegation had ever been made about the integrity of Dr. Kurien and the organization he led. In time, that recognition began to penetrate the high echelons of USAID and, ultimately, the Administrator, M. Peter McPherson, mandated that a solution be reached. A fellow alumnus of Michigan State University where Dr. Kurien had attended graduate school, Dr. McPherson visited NDDB and later invited Dr. Kurien to meet with him in Washington.

What was the solution? The Inspector General agreed that NDDB's auditor would conduct a 100 percent audit and provide them with the results. That was done and a fraction of a percent of the total funding was disallowed because it was used for advertising, an activity barred by the agreement. But well over \$100 million in transactions were examined and not a single penny of dishonesty was discovered.

I mention this because one of Dr. Kurien's extraordinary qualities was his commitment to integrity in all that he and his organizations did. He set up systems to ensure that anyone who strayed would be caught. If tainted milk was found in a Mother Dairy booth in Delhi, both the truck driver and the booth concessionaire were sacked. No second chances. If an IRMA student or faculty member fudged a travel claim, that was the end of their time at the Institute. No second chances. That commitment to integrity was one of the greatest qualities Dr. Kurien exemplified, one that protected him and allowed him to take on the powerful interests he challenged throughout his career.

Dr. Kurien also demanded professional honesty. I happened to be in his office one day when he called one of the Dairy Board's senior officers to ask for his opinion on a difficult issue. It seemed obvious that the officer was trying to present a response that would coincide with what he believed to be Dr. Kurien's view. Dr. Kurien responded: Mr. So and So, if I want to hear my opinion on this matter, I will go to the bathroom, look in the mirror, and ask myself. I wanted to hear your view, but since you are not prepared to offer it, you may go.

In so-called modern business management, much is made of organizations having Visions and Missions. We hear far less about the longevity of these carefully crafted statements or how they were implemented. Dr. Kurien had a vision: dairy and other cooperatives bringing a better life to India's rural people. His mission was doing all he could to ensure that a vast network of cooperatives would not only serve India's rural producers, but would give them the opportunity to participate in grassroots democracy, deciding how the proceeds of their labor would be employed. He was a patriot who believed that India should become a just and equitable nation, one in which every citizen had a place in the Indian sun. He saw cooperatives as building a strong foundation for a just, equitable and democratic nation.

To implement this mission, Dr. Kurien attracted the best and the brightest and, not incidentally, the honest and the committed. During the years I worked with NDDB, when I walked around the buildings in Anand, or Delhi, or Bangalore, or Calcutta, I had the sense that everyone felt that Dr. Kurien was looking over their shoulder and that they had to do their very best.

When new officers joined the Dairy Board, they were often given a challenge that they feared was beyond their ability. It was a sink or swim situation. Some sank. Those who swam went on to make contributions beyond what they had imagined possible. It was my privilege to know and work with many of these people.

There are so many other things one can say about Dr. Kurien. He was an institution builder and, with some institutions like the Reserve Bank of India or the Gujarat Electricity Board, he did not create them, but he contributed to their becoming better institutions. I hope that the officers of the Dairy Board, the students and faculty of IRMA, the employees of the Kaira District Cooperative Milk Producers' Union, of GCMMF, the Indian Dairy Machinery Company, Mother Dairy, Safal and others realize why their institution exists and are inspired by the man who created it.

In his book of papers and speeches, *An Unfinished Dream*, the first paper is one written in March of 1957: *Marketing of Milk Products in India*. It is worth reading. More than a decade before the start of Operation Flood, at a time when the Kaira District Cooperative Milk Producers' Union was still barely a decade old, Dr. Kurien laid out a vision of milk production and marketing in India, one that is clearly a blueprint for the fifty years that followed. And, unlike so many talented people who flit from one job to another, one opportunity succeeded by a more attractive one, Dr. Kurien "stuck to his knitting". He turned down opportunities to be a Minister of the Government of India, a senior UN Agency leader, the head of a major corporation. He saw the future of India as inextricably linked to the rural producer and her quality of life, her participation in the nation's democratic polity. And he never strayed from that path, never wavered in his goal.

I had the privilege of knowing Dr. Kurien for over twenty years and of working with him for more than fifteen. I will be the first to admit that I contributed very little and gained a great deal. It was the experience of a lifetime and I feel blessed that it was my lifetime.



Feast of Memories

Dr E Madhavan, former Regional Director, NDDB

(Source: <https://www.vrikshamandir.com>)

Dr. V Kurien, founder Chairman, NDDB visits Erode

Whenever I went to NDDB, Anand, on official work, I used to request Dr V Kurien, Chairman NDDB to pay a visit to Erode to look up the work of the NDDB spearhead team. Dr Kurien agreed, but on condition that I took him to the school (Diamond Jubilee School) in Gobichettipalayam where he had studied when he was a small boy.

Dr Kurien's father was the Civil Surgeon at the Gobichettipalayam Govt Hospital those days and the family had lived in Gobichettipalayam. I assured Dr Kurien that I would take him first to the Diamond Jubilee School and later to Erode.

So, that was the deal to get Dr Kurien to Erode. Gobichettipalayam was mid-way between Coimbatore and Erode.

Dr Kurien was invited to be the Chief Guest at the Seventh Convocation of the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore on January 17, 1979.

Dr Kurien accepted the invitation and also agreed to visit Erode, after the function. All of us at Erode were delighted and thrilled on Dr Kurien's visit to Erode. The time allotted to Erode, including Gobichettipalayam visit, was very short: January 17 afternoon and January 18 forenoon. Dr Kurien was to take an afternoon flight from Coimbatore to Madras on January 18. But, on my persuasion, he agreed to travel by an afternoon train from Erode to Madras on January 18. We were very happy because that gave us more time with Dr Kurien at Erode.

We drew a detailed plan for Dr Kurien's visit: Jan 17 evening – visit to Diamond Jubilee School, etc; attend a Bonus Distribution Function at Vellankoil Milk Cooperative; Jan 18 forenoon – visit Semboothampalayam Milk Cooperative; breakfast with Dr LK Muthuswamy; meeting with farmers at the Erode Milk Union's premises where the Feeder Balancing Dairy was coming up. This was to be followed by lunch hosted by Mr SK Paramasivan, Chairman Erode Milk Producers' Union.

We were informed about Dr Kurien's programme well in advance and therefore, we had sufficient time to make arrangements for his visits to different places. First of all, I made sure that Dr LK Muthuswamy will be available on both the days. I could also persuade Mrs C Subramaniam to meet Dr & Mrs Kurien at breakfast on January 18, 1979 at the residence of Dr Muthuswamy.

Visit to Gobichettipalayam

At Gobichettipalayam, I took the help of Dr KS Sengottian, a close relation of Dr Muthuswamy. Besides, Dr Sengottian happened to be a schoolmate of Dr Kurien's

brother, K Kurien. Dr Sengottian and K Kurien were alumnae of Diamond Jubilee School. Dr Sengottian introduced me to Mr Sachithanandam, Principal of Diamond Jubilee School.

He was very happy to know that Dr Kurien was an alumnus of Diamond Jubilee School. He agreed to make arrangements for Dr Kurien's visit to the school, including a public function to felicitate Dr Kurien. I spoke to several people in and around Gobichettipalayam and found out at least five people who were Dr Kurien's schoolmates at Diamond Jubilee School.

To my good luck, I could also locate an old Brahmin Teacher, Srinivasachar, who knew the Kurien family very well. Srinivasachar was K Kurien's tuition teacher and whenever he taught K Kurien, V Kurien used to sit/sleep in his lap! I told Srinivasachar about Dr Kurien's visit and requested him to be present on January 17. He gladly agreed. Through enquiries with people who had known the Kurien family, I could also locate the house where they had lived. The building remained the same, had not undergone any change!

We made arrangements for Dr Kurien's visit to Vellankoil and Semboothampalayam Milk Cooperatives and for the farmers' meeting in the Erode Milk Unions' premises. Representatives from all the affiliated milk cooperatives were invited for the meeting. Dr Kurien's stay at Erode on January 15, 1979 was arranged at the Seshayee Paper Mill Guest House, courtesy: Dr Muthuswamy.

Mr Paramasivan and I received Dr & Mrs Kurien at Coimbatore airport on January 16, 1979. Dr & Mrs Kurien stayed at the Agricultural University Guest House, Coimbatore.

The Convocation was in the forenoon of January 17, 1979. Dr Kurien was the Chief Guest and delivered the key note address. I had also attended the function. After the function, Dr & Mrs Kurien and I left for Gobichettipalayam, en route Erode.

We drove straight to Dr Sengottian's house at Gobichettipalayam where we were met by Dr Sengottian, Mr SK Paramasivan and Dr Muthuswamy. From there, Dr Kurien was taken first to the house where his family had lived. On entering the house, Dr Kurien became emotional and said that he was hardly four or five years old when he lived there and that he had only vague memories of his stay.

Visit to Diamond Jubilee School

Later, Dr Kurien visited the Diamond Jubilee School. Mr Sachithanandam, the Principal of the school took Dr Kurien around the school. Dr Kurien recognised the class room where he had studied, even the bench and place where he had sat! Seeing the school bell, Dr Kurien said that it was the same bell which was there during his days. Dr Kurien became very emotional after visiting the school and tears rolled out of his eyes.

He wrote in the school visitor's book: "I am happy to visit the school where I studied fifty years ago. If at all my life had become purposeful, it was because of the strong foundation I received in this school. (Signed) Verghese Kurien dated January 17, 1979".

After visiting Diamond Jubilee School, Dr Kurien attended the public meeting arranged by Mr Sachithanandam. The audience consisted of leading personalities from Gobichettipalayam and nearby villages, many of them alumnae of Diamond Jubilee School and staff and students of the school.



The Deputy Collector, Gobichettipalayam, a young IAS officer, was also on the stage. Mr Srinivasachar, one time Tuition Teacher of K Kurien, was specially brought to the function and was seated on the stage. Mr Sachithanandam welcomed Dr Kurien and introduced him to the audience. Mr Srinivasachar recounted his memories and shared his association with the Kurien family, particularly the interaction he had with K Kurien. He recalled the days he had given tuition to K Kurien when Dr Kurien, a small child then, used to sit and at times sleep in his lap.

He felt it was God's will that brought Dr Kurien to Gobichettipalayam because of which he could see him and also reminisce the good old days. Mr Srinivasachar spoke in chaste English, with absolute clarity. Dr Kurien thanked Mr Sachithanandam for taking him around the school and arranging the public function. He said he was immensely happy to visit the school where he studied some fifty years ago and that he would cherish the visit forever. He thanked Mr Srinivasachar for having made it convenient to meet him, despite his old age. He complimented him on the chaste English he spoke with absolute clarity and said that the present generation had a lot to learn from him. Dr Kurien wished the Diamond Jubilee School all the best in the coming years.

Visit to Milk Producers Cooperative Societies, meeting Chairmen of Societies at Erode

From Gobichettipalayam, we drove to Vellankoil Milk Cooperative where the bonus distribution function was arranged. It was dark when we reached the village. The entire village had turned up for the function and the meeting arena was illuminated and bore a festive look.

The President of the milk cooperative welcomed Dr Kurien and introduced him to the farmers. Dr Kurien complimented the farmers for organising the cooperative in their village and managing it efficiently. He was happy that the cooperative was in profit and that the members were being paid bonus. The cooperative disbursed some Rs 23, 000 bonus to its members, during 1978-79. Besides bonus, the cooperative also distributed prizes to the farmers who had supplied the highest quantities of milk, three prizes in all. Mrs Kurien gave away the prizes to the recipients, all ladies. The function was followed by dinner hosted by the Society President.

On January 18 morning, Dr Kurien visited the Semboothampalayam Milk Cooperative. On way, I showed him the milk distribution outlets we had recently organised in Erode Town. At the milk cooperative, Dr Kurien was happy to see the farmers (many of them ladies) standing in orderly queue and supplying milk. He spoke to the farmers and the society staff on the functioning of the cooperative. During 1978-79, this cooperative had disbursed some Rs 15,000 as bonus to its members. This cooperative had obtained a telephone connection recently and at the request of the President, Dr Kurien inaugurated the new telephone, by making a call to another cooperative which had a telephone connection.

After visiting the Semboothampalayam cooperative, Dr & Mrs Kurien had breakfast with Dr LK Muthuswamy and his family. Mrs C Subramaniam had joined them at breakfast. It was indeed a memorable occasion for Dr & Mrs Kurien to meet all of them, particularly Mrs C Subramaniam who had specially come down from Madras.

After breakfast, Dr Kurien attended the farmers' meeting at the premises of the Erode Milk Producers' Union. Representatives of about 200 cooperatives had assembled for the meeting. Mr Paramasivan, Chairman Erode Milk Producers' Union welcomed Dr Kurien and introduced him to the farmers. He profusely thanked Dr Kurien for all the support that the NDDDB was extending to the Union. Dr Kurien in his address to the farmers complimented them for their efforts in successfully replicating the Anand Pattern in Erode. He said that the Erode cooperatives will be a model not only for rest of Tamil Nadu, but all the Southern States as well. Further, he said that the "Anand Pattern" was being tried for other commodities also viz fruits & vegetable, oilseeds, cotton, salt etc. He wanted "Erode" to be another "Anand" and wished every success in their endeavours.

Speaking at the Coimbatore Agricultural University Convocation Address, Dr Kurien said "The Anand Cooperative became the basic model for the national dairy development programme which is popularly known as Operation Flood. Under this programme, over the last few years, the Erode District Cooperative Milk Producers' Union has come up. Already, it has 153 village cooperatives. It handles 22,000 litres of milk daily and we are sure that it will rapidly come to handle much more than that, when its new plant, which is now under construction, comes on stream. In fact, Erode had become the Anand of the south. It is one of the 37 district dairy cooperatives which are now arising all over India. Moreover, Erode is the nucleus of a major milk cooperative network, which will cover most of Tamil Nadu during Operation Flood II".

Mr Paramasivan hosted a sumptuous lunch in honour of Dr & Mrs Kurien at his ancestral home in Chinnampalayam village. Mrs Paramasivan was excited to have Dr & Mrs Kurien at their house. For her, it was several days of planning and hard work to treat the guests with the very best of the family tradition. Dr & Mrs Kurien enjoyed the lunch and profusely thanked them for all their courtesies. He invited Mr & Mrs Paramasivan to Anand. Mr Paramasivan thanked Dr & Mrs Kurien for visiting them and accepting their courtesy. He said that their visit to Erode and their house will be long cherished and remembered.

After lunch, Dr & Mrs Kurien left for Madras by train. For Dr Kurien, a train journey was unthinkable because of his busy schedule which necessitated travel only by air. But, Dr Kurien's weakness had always been the farmer for whom he will sacrifice anything! As the train started moving the station, Dr And Mrs Kurien, standing at the door of the coach, said "Poyittuvarom" (Goodbye).

A few days after reaching Anand, I received a letter from Dr Kurien which said "Dear Dr Madhavan: Just a line to convey my thanks to you for having made our visit to Coimbatore and Erode so very memorable. You have certainly succeeded in infusing the Anand spirit in that area. Mrs Kurien joins me in conveying to you and Mrs Madhavan our kindest regards. Yours sincerely, V Kurien dated January 27, 1979".

To me, this was not just a letter. It was the most precious gift that I could ever think of: a life time achievement award!

Memories of Dr V. Kurien

Ms Shantha Sheela Nair, former Secretary Mines, Government of India

(Source: <https://www.vrikshamandir.com>)

Marketing is when you sell a refrigerator to an Eskimo

The first time I saw the legend. It was in 1979 or so – I had been appointed special officer for the Oil Seed Mission, but transferred abruptly. Dr. Kurien had come to Chennai. I had not met him yet.

There was a meeting with the Chief Minister – Dr. M.G. Ramachandran. I was a very junior officer but was summoned to be present, as I sat in the back row.

I saw the two greats exchanging pleasantries but still a bit strained and formal. The meeting started and Dr. Kurien at his eloquent best spoke about Operation Flood and then came to oilseeds.

While MGR was quiet with talk of the Dairy Revolution, he did not seem too convinced with the oil seed agenda. Dr Kurien then spoke about packaged edible oil and how it was to be leveraged. MGR was least impressed.



Then Dr. Kurien hit a sixer, he gave an example of the importance of marketing and said – “you should be able to sell a refrigerator to an Eskimo – that is marketing!” MGR was bowled over and warmly shook Dr Kurien’s hand. The deal was done and I was introduced by the Chief Secretary as the one to implement the project!

Though that morning I had been transferred. Dr Kurien said “I haven’t met the lady, but you give and take away”. The Chief Secretary said she will do both jobs and MGR nodded.

MGR was quite a tough one to deal with but I saw the elan with which Dr. Kurien worked his way around him, his body language and words were absolutely charming and delightful.

War hero in the game of favourites !

I had worked on the oil seed mission for a while and then went as Collector Trichy and because of my association with Dr. Kurien got my district included in Operation Flood. A few years later, MGR died and there was a change of Government.

The “favorites” of the MGR years as assumed by the new Government, needed to be put in their place. I was one of them and was among only 3 officers banished from Chennai. Two others being the personal staff of MGR.

I was sent to Salem and was languishing when Dr Kurien came to know of it. He didn't speak to me or contact me but asked the Joint Secretary, Dairy in the Agriculture Ministry in Delhi, Shri Parthasarathy who was from Tamil Nadu cadre to find out whether I would like to come to Delhi.

I jumped with delight. Dr. Kurien went out of his way to pull me out from the hostile environment, I was in.

His friend and sparring partner was Shri. T N Seshan, then Cabinet Secretary. I had worked with Seshan too when he was Agriculture Secretary in Tamil Nadu. Dr. Kurien told Seshan that he wanted me in the Dairy Technology Mission in Delhi! Seshan too was most helpful and wanted to please Dr. Kurien.

After much wrangling with the State Government and Seshan at his best succeeded in getting me out of Salem and posted in Delhi! I suddenly looked like a war-hero but my General was Dr. Kurien!

Aya Ram, Gaya Ram, and now Jai Ram !

When I was in Delhi in the Technology Mission. Shri Sam Pitroda and Shri Jai Ram Ramesh were the two driving all the Technology Missions.

Dr. Kurien was often at meetings in Delhi with Sam Pitroda and the Secretary of the Agriculture Ministry. At one of the stormy meetings where Jai Ram Ramesh was holding the floor with his aggressive rendering of how the Technology Missions should be run, Dr. Kurien was losing patience and he was waiting for his turn to speak.

When finally Jai Ram Ramesh calmed down, Dr. Kurien made his opening statement – “I have seen “Aaya Rams” and “Gaya Rams” now I have to deal with Jay Ram”! Sam Pitroda and everyone else exploded with laughter and it was Dr. Kurien's day after that!.

From Boho Shishu Vihar to Anandalaya

Shri RK Nagar, former Senior General Manager, NDDDB

(Source: <https://www.vrikshamandir.com>)



Photo courtesy Anandalaya Website

I come from a family of teachers. I deliberately chose a non-teaching profession but education always remained close to my heart, especially at school level.

There are two strong reasons for it. One, my father spent his entire life starting new schools in what was Mewar region of Rajasthan and two, he rightly believed that a school has the most important role in shaping the character of a child. He believed in it, worked for it and his work left a very deep impression on me.

So, when I was confronted with the question, “in which nursery school are we going to send our son? He is already two years old and next year we will have to admit him in a nursery school. Is there a nursery school like Chetan Balwadi (run by child development department of the Home Science College, MSU, Baroda)?” I had no answer to my wife’s very innocently asked question. She did her Masters in Home Science from MSU, Baroda, had closely observed functioning of “Chetan Balwadi”, and knew what exactly she was looking for in a nursery school. As such her concern was genuine.

I searched for the right nursery school through my limited local contacts and realised that there was none in Anand that came anywhere close to what my wife was looking for. Leave alone a Balwadi, even primary schools were Gujarati medium and not up to expectations.

The only English teaching school in Vidhyanagar was jokingly termed by my friend Ravindra Vaishnav working in Amul as “English Cheating School”. He used to say, “In this school, they teach English in Gujarati medium”.

You don’t care as long as you are a bachelor or not a parent. But once you have a child, your priorities change. In my case the concern doubled since my wife’s family too had deep roots

in education (my father in law a very eminent educationist founded a number of educational institutions in and around Udaipur).

So now we were two intense people under the same roof sharing a common concern- education of our first child.

At this point I thought it best to share my concern with someone who will view my problem with sympathy.

Dr. Aneja offers a solution

Who better than Dr Aneja, I thought and headed straight to his office. He gave me a patient hearing. At the end of it he made a suggestion, “Nagar, how about starting our own nursery school”? “But where”, I asked. “There is a school right opposite our campus. Try and find out if we can buy it off. I think it belongs to DN High School trust”.

I found the idea so exciting that the very same day, I landed at DN High School and met the managing trustee Shri Vithalbhai Patel with this ridiculous idea.

My conversation with Vallabhbhai (in retrospect) was most bizarre. After I introduced myself and exchanged greetings, I told him of our interest in buying off the school opposite our campus.

“People working in NDDDB are from all over India and our jobs are transferable. We want to start an English medium school so that our employees don’t face admission issues when they are transferred to other states. We would like to start a nursery school to begin with and therefore we are looking for a suitable premise close to our campus. Can you please consider selling off that school premise to us (meaning NDDDB)?”

Vallabhbhai was a very seasoned and highly reputed educationist. He appeared shocked and, I am sure, he must have thought that he is dealing with an utterly immature scatter brain. But he kept his composure, sympathised with me and offered an alternative. He asked, “how many children do you have in NDDDB campus to start an all English medium nursery class”.

“Eight to ten” was my reply !

Vallabhbhai was as calm as ever and said “Although this number is low, we will nevertheless start a batch and hope that we finally get about 25 children from your neighbourhood institutions-Agriculture College and Veterinary College. Don’t worry, I will do the best I can but remember we cannot sell the school premise. I hope you are ok with it”.

His answer was music to my ears. I was very excited, headed straight to Dr. Aneja’s office and gave him the good news. Few months later, Vallabhbhai started a new nursery school batch with, I think 8 children from NDDDB campus. But this was a short lived dream. Parents of children from both Agriculture and Veterinary colleges refused to transfer their children from Gujarati to English medium. Naturally after couple of months, we had to rather grudgingly shift our children to the only English medium school in Vallabh Vidhyanagar. They were all admitted to senior KG.

I had just witnessed the death of my dream.



Focus shifts from nursery school to Kendriya Vidyalaya, V V Nagar

Next year, with great difficulty, almost three months after the start of the academic session I managed to secure admission of my son to Kendriya Vidyalaya.

It was at this time that I realised that although our nodal ministry was the Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India, we didn't have any of the privileges of the government employees.

Children of employees of NDDB were placed in general category for admission in central school while the children of employees of private companies like Elecon and Vallabh Glass got the second preference. The first preference naturally went to the employees of Indian railways and Indian post and telegraph departments.

To me it was a wholly unacceptable situation. It was like consigning the fate of our children to the mercy of state education boards. Our jobs are transferable anywhere in India and with every transfer, our children will have to face a new curriculum. How preposterous.

At this time, my priority shifted to somehow getting NDDB placed above Elecon and Vallabh Glass for admission in central school of VV Nagar. I met the acting principal of the school, Shri Goyal who advised me to take up the case with the Assistant Commissioner of Kendriya Vidhyalaya Sangathan, Shri Deep Chand Solanki who was based in Gandhinagar.

I made a case, Dr Aneja signed the 'petition' and I went to Gandhinagar to meet Mr. Solanki.

He was from Ajmer, Rajasthan and a very humble man. When I explained to him our problem and gave him the 'petition', he called his PA, dictated an order, handed me a copy and told me, "Mr. Nagar, from now on children of NDDB employees will be placed in second category. After all NDDB is an institution of the government and its operational independence cannot be a reason to place it in general category".

He then gave me a sealed envelope addressed to the principal of the school Shri Goyal and asked me to hand it to him as soon as I reach Anand. I did as advised by him. I will always remember with gratitude Mr. Solanki's help in opening the doors of Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan for our children.

The principal Mr. Goyal acted swiftly and all NDDB children seeking admission in central school were admitted much to the annoyance of Elecon and Vallabh Glass employees. I had a taste of their anger in the first parent-teacher meeting that followed the admissions. They threatened to take the matter up at the highest level in KVS, since these two industries were somehow contributing to the budget of the school.

Soon, Mr Goyal was transferred and Mr M Z Khan (kids of the school called him Amzad Khan after the famous villain of SHOLEY) came in as the new principal.

I gave him a courtesy call and in this very first meeting he told me, "Mr. Nagar, you managed to get away with it this year, but I promise you that from next year onwards not

a single child from NDDB will be admitted in central school. Take my word for it. Mr Solanki is retiring and I will have this order reversed by the new assistant commissioner.” It was this direct threat that made me reignite my efforts for an NDDB administered school affiliated to CBSE.

BOHO Shishu Vihar (BSV)

Boho, the staff club of NDDB was started a year after NDDB offices moved from Multi-storey Amul office to the newly built NDDB campus in 1971. On the right is the Boho logo designed by Shri Arvind Swaminathan (courtesy Boho Facebook page) who besides his normal work gave his time to organise and institutionalise some of the Boho activities in its initial years.



With this direct threat, we were back to square one. Start de-novo with the idea of a nursery school. But this time, I wasn't alone. I had the full and unconditional support of two very compassionate senior ladies from the campus- Mrs Sheela Dalaya and Mrs Krishna Haldipur. We first toyed with the idea of starting a nursery as an activity of BOHO club and then make a case for a school affiliated to the central board of secondary education.

Mrs Dalaya and her daughter happily took the responsibility of managing BOHO SHISHU VIHAR and sometime in 1981-82, it became functional in the club house. The mother-daughter duo were fantastic with children who had a real blast. We had taken the first step but we were still miles away from our final goal-a CBSE affiliated school.

But operating from the club house was indeed problematic- the washrooms in the club house were designed for use only by adults. Small kids therefore needed assistance of an adult. We had to therefore look for an alternate place within the campus. None of the existing buildings however met the requirements.

At around this time, NDDB acquired around 15 acres of land from kheti wadi, where Anandalaya now stands. It had some old structures that needed to be demolished. VS Behla, who was the head of engineering was going to have a look at these civil structures and he casually asked me to join him. “Nagar, come for a walk with me”, he said and I readily agreed.

When we reached the first structure, we found it in good shape. I asked Behla if this building can be saved. He replied, ‘Sure, but what do you want it for?’ “BOHO SHISHU VIHAR”, I replied and we were with Dr Aneja with a verbal proposal to get the building renovated.

In next one month, we had a fully renovated and furnished building ready to house “BSV”, the kids moved there and were very happy to see new colourful furniture and classrooms. We had, at that moment made a new beginning. That building still stands and houses the Oriental Bank branch.

The next part of the journey was not easy though. For next 4 years, we made no progress. So our kids went from BSV to Kendriya Vidyalaya. It was better than before but still very unsatisfactory as the KV was always short of trained staff and temporary teachers invariably failed to come to expectations.

Back to demand of a school



Photo courtesy Anandalaya Website

I was lucky to get full support of Mrs Dalaya and Mrs Haldipur. I shared my concern with them and they agreed to take the matter up with Dr. Kurien. They too realised that the only answer was an NDDDB administered CBSE affiliated school where children of the employees of NDDDB, IRMA, GCMMF, AMUL, Tribhuvandas Foundation etc. can study without having to undergo the pains of a changed curriculum in case of the employee's transfer.

To be honest, I was in no position to take up the matter with Dr Kurien all by myself and needed one of them to initiate a dialogue with him. Mrs Dalaya took the initiative, fixed an appointment with Dr Kurien and we three made it to his office at the appointed hour.

The meeting was a fiasco. Dr. Kurien check mated us with his opening remark, "What is this delegation? I don't like delegations. Besides, NDDDB has too many things to do and education is not our business. But don't point at IRMA", he added "I am talking of school education".

We came out disappointed but both Mrs Dalaya and Mrs Haldipur assured me that they will continue to persuade Dr. Kurien. "Have patience and don't loose heart", they advised me. They were very determined to have a school that meets our expectations.

We continued our follow up and found Dr. Kurien softening his stand a bit but an assurance was still far away.

I was transferred to Bangalore in June 1986. About a month before the transfer- I guess in late April or early May, I was returning to Anand from Delhi. I received a message from late Shri ZS Chatwal that a separate car is not being sent to pick you up from Ahmedabad airport and that I should take a lift with Dr. Kurien in his car.

Car pool was introduced to save on unnecessary travel between Anand and Ahmedabad/ Baroda airports only a week ago and I was perhaps the first one to get a lift in Dr. Kurien's car.

Just as we were out of Ahmedabad municipal limits, Dr. Kurien opened the conversation. "What is this school thing you are after Nagar. You know it is a big responsibility and we can't do everything. There are things that are best left to specialists. Why don't you talk to one of these educational trusts. We can see how to support them".

I explained to him why such a thing was not feasible since none of the local trusts were interested in adopting CBSE curriculum.

"All right, give me one good reason why NDDDB should have its own school". "If your argument is convincing, I will agree to your demand".

I said, "Sir, besides NDDDB we now have IRMA, GCMMF and possibly other institutions where you are recruiting professionals of high caliber with the expectation that they will have a long innings in Anand. But if a professional finds that his/her children will not have a good future just because lack of quality schooling, how many will stick in Anand for more than a couple of years? No professional would like his children to end up in a mediocre career? A good school will only support your dream of building quality institutions in Anand".



I had not prepared for this reply. It came spontaneously, it came without fear and I was myself taken aback at this reply.

By this time we had reached outskirts of Nadiad. He gave me an intense look, smiled and said, “Can I have a nap now” and he promptly went to sleep.

We arrived at his house in Amul campus. He asked me to come in and take a seat in the living room. He went in to freshen up, called out Mrs Kurien and said, “Mollu, this fellow Nagar has been lecturing me right from the time we got in the car at Ahmedabad airport on why we should have our own school and has given me a headache. Now give us a cup of strong coffee”.

I looked at Mrs Kurien. She smiled and her smile conveyed that she knows him too well to believe what he said.

A month after this incidence, I was transferred to Bangalore. In between I had worked out a proposal for the school and what all formalities we will have to follow to get CBSE affiliation.

“Nagar, leave the school proposal file with your successor (PC Bardhan) and ask him to follow it with me” were his last instructions to me before I moved to Bangalore.

He gave me the news of NDDB board having approved the proposal to setup a school when we met in Hyderabad for the management committee meeting of Indian Immunologicals’ sometime in late 1988 or early 1989. “Nagar, you are getting your school. And I am going to call it “Doodh School”, he jokingly added (with pun intended at Doon School).

A couple of months later, one day my PS Sundaramurthy walked into my office in the Bangalore campus and said, “ Sir, one Mr. Neelkantan wants to see you. Can I send him in?”

Neelkanthan introduced himself as the newly appointed principal of the new school named “Anandalaya”. He asked me only one question-“Mr. Nagar, what kind of school did you have in mind when you moved the proposal”.

Well, finally ten years of patience paid off. Anandalaya has redefined school education in Anand and now a number of new good quality schools dot the landscape of the milk city. Although my son never went to Anandalaya, my daughter studied there and, to the best of my knowledge, is the only one so far to have done her 12th board exam with humanities stream.

From the forgoing, the first impression that anyone will get is that Dr. Kurien reluctantly agreed to the school. My own feeling is that it was not so. He took time only to ensure that Anandalaya emerges as an institution of class and character in education that Anand had not witnessed so far and sets an example to follow. It had to be like any of his other creations in Anand-no less.

Guess, who taught me cooking?

Shri RK Nagar, former Senior General Manager, NDDB

(Source: <https://www.vrikshamandir.com>)

Staying in NDDB hostel was an extremely pleasing experience from the days of Manibhuvan, where we had to observe some discipline-at least in terms of the time for waking up and store water in drums and buckets as municipal water supply timings were very odd. In the hostel, we had the luxury of getting up at leisure as long as we made it to the office in time.

Office in time! Yes, I can talk about myself, I mean my routine.

Once Raoji took responsibility of the hostel mess, life became more cozy. I never locked the door from inside. I used to get my morning tea served in my room (no.23, south-west corner room in the old hostel). He would leave the cup near my bed, wake me up with साहेब चाय पीलो and close the door behind while leaving. I never bothered to look at the watch, but gulped the tea while half asleep and promptly went to sleep again. It happened day after day after.....

Raoji would then come in again at 9.30 am to collect the cup and announce, साहेब नाश्ता तैयार है, and that was the real alarm. I would rush to the bathroom – thankfully I didn't have to share it with anyone- and get ready in 20 minutes. Raoji knew that I will be down by 9.50 am so he kept the breakfast ready and served it as soon as I sat on the chair. Eight minutes were enough to finish the breakfast and at 10 sharp, I would be in the office. Life was great- sleep late, wake up late, still make it to office in time, have a hot lunch in the hostel with the hostlers and officers/staff who commuted from Baroda/Ahmedabad and opted to eat a hot lunch in the hostel.

It was all going very well, no tension of cleaning the room and attached bathroom, no tension to search for food, sleep late on Sundays and other holidays, eat hot lunch and dinner and for me especially, a plate full of fried green chilies lightly sprinkled with salt with each meals etc. The pampering was at it's peak and I was really getting used to this rather unnatural lifestyle.

I wished it had lasted a little longer, but after a few months, I was allotted D-11. Life had gone full circle and days to sleep on floor returned unexpectedly. Since we had moved to furnished accommodations on the campus, I had disposed off whatever little furniture I had. So, I was left without a cot, without a bedding and pillow and with it went out the privilege of morning tea by the bedside. No stove, hot plate or cooking gas, so dependence on hostel tea was now with a difference-get up early, dress up, walk up to hostel and get your first tea.



Breakfast, lunch and dinner however continued as before. Life was still pretty Royal. But even this privilege didn't last long. The hostel mess was designed to cater 25 persons, but we were now close to 70 at lunch time there. It used to be quite chaotic as everyone wanted to quickly finish his lunch to be back in office in time.

It was during one of these chaotic lunch times that Dr. Kurien walked in with a guest. He was taking him around and showing the facilities that gave NDDB campus its unique character. When he came towards the dining side with the guest, he noticed quite a few of us having lunch while standing. It looked more like part buffet and part sit down lunch. The scene was quite chaotic with Raoji and his Assistants running back and forth from kitchen to serve the hungry crowd.

When Dr. Kurien saw this, he asked, "How many of you stay in this hostel?" "Few hands went up so he asked others, "What are you doing here?" "Having lunch sir, we eat here every day, someone replied.

"Are you not aware that the hostel kitchen is meant only for hostlers"?

And with this question, from that day, we lost the privilege of eating in the hostel mess.

So, in a short span of barely two months, from Royalty, I was on a barebones living in D-11, with floor to sleep on, and no cooked food to eat. But life couldn't go on like that. I picked up from where I had left when I shifted to Chummary. Set the bedroom first, got a gas connection and tried hands at cooking. I had never cooked before, but had keenly observed my mother cooking, so I had some idea of the process. Soon I learnt to cook vegetables and daal, and relished it with freshly baked bread from Ambrosia bakery located at Jagnath temple.

A couple of months later, a friend of mine from college visited me and I gave him a glimpse of my newly acquired culinary skills. He loved the food and asked me, "When did you learn to cook and who taught you".

My one word answer left him scratching his head. I never elaborated on it and left him guessing.

Do you want to know who taught me? It might leave you scratching your head too, but guess who-Dr. Kurien. I know you are grinning.....

A real reward to me by Dr Kurien our Chairman

Dr Mukund Naware, former Senior Project Executive, NDDB

(Source: <https://www.vrikshamandir.com>)

Like every story this story too has a beginning

Almost one month had passed since my return to Anand and then one fine day I received a direct message from the Chairman's office asking me to meet Dr. Kurien at 11 am.

Surprised and wondering why am I being called to meet the Chairman I went to Dr. Chothani and told him about the message I had received. He gave me just a nod. He probably knew the purpose behind that message.

I went to Chairman's Office five minutes before time. Shailendra Kumar (SK), who was the then Executive Assistant to the Chairman asked me to be seated. As I waited I could hear the Chairman's voice in high pitch coming from his cabin.

No, it is not your turn

At 11 am sharp I thought I should go inside. SK also suggested that I could go inside the Chairman's chamber.

But the moment I opened the door I heard the voice .." No, it is Not your Turn."

Taken aback I returned to my seat and waited for few minutes.

One more attempt by me and the same thing happened . "No it is Not your Turn." This time his voice was high.

I didn't know what to do. Then SK told me that Shekhar Roy was inside and Chairman was upset over certain issues. SK asked me to wait patiently till he got indication. I kept quiet.

Some more minutes and then I was called in the Chairman's chamber.

Once inside I noticed the scene had completely changed.

And when it was my turn the unexpected happened

There he was the Chairman NDDB in altogether different mood welcoming me.

"Come on Dr. Naware, have a seat." he said. As I heard him I felt relaxed and honored. I sat in front of him.

"I am told you have worked under difficult conditions in Jalgaon. I want to put you in still difficult conditions. Would you like to go to Israel ? " Dr. Kurien asked.

Somewhat surprised I remember saying "Yes Sir. I would love to go. I would like to see how they have developed Israeli Friesian breed of cows."

"Do you eat beef ?". Perhaps you may have to eat it there.

"Sir I don't mind " I said.



“But remember when you go there a war may be going on, bombing from the air could happen.” He said.

Probably he wanted to examine my reaction. But I was fearless. Then he narrated how Israelis and Arabs are brothers from the same clan but fighting for each others’ lives.

“In a war like situation I do not know whether you will go. But I know I recommend you. And if you go there meet the Dairy Chief of Israel, I forgot his name but get his name and other details from Shailendra.” He said and the meeting was over.

As I came outside I was in air. I straightway went to Dr. Chothani to give him the ‘news’. He was no doubt aware of it. He handed over to me the letter received from Indo-Israel Cultural Association, Ahmedabad requesting for deputation of one officer who could join a group of 15 persons whose visit to Israel was cleared at Non Govt. level by Govt. of India.

Dr. Chothani asked me to take steps to obtain Passport and undergo vaccination etc. The process began on the same day. I contacted that Association to obtain all the details. I personally went to Ahmedabad and handed over the cheque for required amount to cover the expenses. As suggested by Dr. Chothani I also met Shri Tribhuvandas Patel at his residence and told him about my visit to Israel. I was fortunate to have his elderly advice and blessings.

In the beginning our plan was to go there in November 77 and accordingly I made all preparations. But due to extreme weather conditions in Israel the visit was just postponed. As the next schedule of departure was unknown NDDDB decided to transfer me to the newly opened Regional Office at Bangalore. From there I was to go to Israel and I was looking forward to it.

Travel to Israel

Finally it was on 26th April 1978 that our group boarded Alitalia Jumbo Jet flight from Bombay to Tel Aviv. It took about five hours to land there in the morning. Our group (2 ladies and 14 gents) comprised a Professor, School teachers, a Librarian, a Commercial Photographer, a Director of a cooperative bank, few Progressive farmers- one prominent dairy farmer in them- and two College students. I can say I only had technical background.

On arrival we found that a large size bus had come for us at the airport. Person who had come to receive us was also driving it. Within 30 minutes we reached Mishmar Hasharon, a kibbutz 30 km north of Tel Aviv. This was the place of our stay for next 35 days and the Kibbutz was our host. We were there as volunteers willing to work for 6 hours a day and they would offer lodging, boarding and limited travel in return. On the first day we didn’t understand all about that but the things became clear day by day.

The kibbutz

In Hebrew Kibbutz is commune. At that time in Israel typically a kibbutz had 150 families staying together on the land obtained on long lease. The families with common country origin joined there and agreed to work 8 hours a day doing every kind of work as may be required in rotation. In return the kibbutz offered them complete housing, food, clothing,

medical aid and children' education till matriculation on the basis of equality. The kibbutz had common kitchen and the food cooked there was for the whole community and no family expected to cook at home. The kibbutz would manage lands and undertake agricultural farming, dairying, poultry, horticulture, floriculture, fish pond, horticulture etc and as they progressed they would diversify into commercial activity like manufacture of furniture, electronics , animal feeds, drugs etc. Between number of kibbutzim (plural) the transaction was on barter basis with adjustments for each give and take . At apex level each kibbutz became member in the Federation of Kibbutz Movement which would settle matters between members.

This Federation also undertook those activities which a single kibbutz was unable to do like running Colleges, Hospitals, Cattle Feed Plants etc. A family could join kibbutz with no entrance fee and could not take away anything if they left. In kibbutz there was no currency involved and it was a cashless society. At that time there were 250 kibbutzim in Israel. The Government classified them as Cooperative Societies.

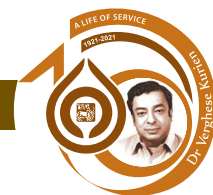
A unique cooperative arrangement for 24X7 cooperative living round the year. It can be said that only Israelis can do that !

Our kibbutz Mishmar Hasharon was established by Polish immigrants who spoke Yiddish language. They had 200 acres of land on lease and they were growing oranges, grape fruits, cotton etc, had a fish pond with carp fish, a nursery growing saplings in pouches, a poultry farm and most importantly a commercial bakery supplying daily bread to over 100 kibbutzim.

Kibbutz population was around 450 and they used to take volunteers up to 150 during harvest time. Other attraction was that the kibbutz had Hebrew teaching school (Ulpan) where volunteers would receive tuitions in Hebrew language that qualified them to get admission in the University there. The kibbutz had mechanized laundry, excellent community kitchen (fully mechanized) and a big dining hall. Only six seven persons working there cooked food for entire kibbutz. The meals were Vegetarian, non vegetarian and for Diabetic people.

During our stay we all were assigned various duties. Sometimes the whole group worked together like harvesting oranges from trees using aluminum ladder and cutter with a bag on the shoulder. We removed weeds from cotton field. I worked in bakery production line and cleaned its chimney by sand paper. One day I went in a van to deliver bread at number of locations. I worked in nursery shifting the saplings from one place to other. I cleaned poultry house. We all worked in dining hall for clean up and arranging tables for next meal. It was incredibly different lifestyle and many of us learnt dignity of labour there. To go round the places for professional gain I volunteered to work in night shifts.

During our stay we dined as we liked. We were lodged in a barrack and provided with camp cots, bed sheets, blanket etc. We had access to their swimming pool also. In community dining hall they held cultural programs and film shows in the week end. We participated in all those activities.



Professional Learnings

I enjoyed living in Kibbutz and getting familiar with the social life and the way economic activities were structured among kibbutzim. I was keen to add to my professional knowledge but to have exposure to any professional learning it was necessary for me to take immediate steps. Dr. Amrita Patel had told me to contact one Dr. Pipano in Veterinary College, Tel Aviv and to get the details on Theileria Vaccine developed by him.

I had to do something and explore possibilities of exposure to professional learning.

I had to make headway somewhere. I sent a post card addressed to the Dairy Chief of Israel and sent it to Tel Aviv not even knowing exactly where that office was. I also posted a card to Dr. Pipano at Veterinary College, Bet Dagan.

To my surprise on the very next day by 10 am a telephone call was received in kibbutz office. The person working in office was surprised. I was called from the work place. The caller from Ministry told me about my post card and invited me to their office in Tel Aviv and also gave the details of how to reach there. The caller also spoke to the office person and he must have asked him to guide me.

Yes, I had broken the ice.

Next day I went to Tel Aviv before time and found the building where office was located. I had no problem whatsoever and at 10 am I entered the room of the Dairy Chief. There was one more person sitting by his side. When I said that I am from NDDB that is chaired by Dr. Vergese Kurien there was good response from the boss "Well that's familiar name!" he said.

Then they exchanged few sentences in Hebrew and asked my interests. Then and there they finalized our group's visit to Tel Aviv Dairy and also to Tel Aviv station of Hebrew University Jerusalem. They also noted certain places where I alone could go separately. For me the meeting was most fruitful.

In next few days our entire group visited Tel Aviv dairy that was handling one million liters of milk per day at that time and had just introduced fruit yoghurts. We went to Hebrew University one afternoon and spent time in Horticulture and Water Management departments since the farmers in our group had specific questions to ask there. For both these trips our kibbutz gave their bus.

My solo visits

Now about my solo visits to various places. As stated earlier in order to make such visits possible I worked in night shifts and obtained permission each time. The kibbutz management was also generous to respond well and helped me by telling how to reach to those places.

1 Veterinary College Bet Dagan :

In response to my post card the Veterinary College informed me that Dr. Pipano was abroad and on his return I could expect a call from him. It really happened one day as Dr.

Pipano himself spoke to me over phone and fixed my visit to his department. He showed me his laboratory where he had raised different species of ticks for vaccine production. He gave me number of research papers authored by him and expressed willingness to supply a thousand doses of Theileria vaccine to India (via Australia) which according to him could have been effective in India. I was overwhelmed by helpful nature of this great scientist who was pioneer in that vaccine. (I understand that later on this offer was turned down by Government of India).

2 Israel Cattle Breeders' Association :

One afternoon I visited the office of ICBA in Tel Aviv. Tsvi Marks, the manager had sent me a letter giving each and every detail as to how to reach there. We had discussion at length about how the Israeli Friesian breed was developed and how average production level of 8000 kg per cow per year was achieved by selective breeding, rigorous culling and maintaining the national herd of cows at one lakh five thousand only. He gave me a copy of their book titled ' Dairy Farming in Israel ' (which is still with me as a souvenir).

3 AI Centre, Saarid :

One day I took a long bus ride and was out for more than half a day to visit the kibbutz named Saarid which was running Artificial Insemination Centre for Israel North. I only remember that a very old Veterinarian was managing it and they were freezing bull semen in form of tablets and not in straws.

4 Animal Disease Control Office :

One day I went by public bus to northern city Hadera to meet one Dr. Aharoni who was the Cattle Disease Control Officer of Israel. He gave me lot of information as to how the tick borne diseases were controlled by traditional method of passing animals through dips and of late by vaccinating them. However, according to him many dairy farms there needed better hygiene.

Although I visited the above mentioned places I felt it necessary to visit some dairy farms as well so as to get a first hand feel of the way dairy farms were run.. As our kibbutz did not have a dairy farm I had to visit other places and look for dairy farms. The dairy farms that I was able to visit were small with 30 or 40 cows, fed scientifically with complete feeds and machine milked. They also had technical advisory service for issues related to feeding and breeding of animals.

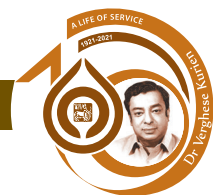
We were in Israel only for 35 days. Within that period I could cover these technical aspects. Kibbutz also made arrangements to show us Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Dead Sea.

Every story has an end

All above in just 35 days. With this rich experience I returned to Bangalore in early June.

I sent my Tour Report with all the details to Head Office. When it was put up to Dr. M. N. Menon, Ex Animal Husbandry Commissioner (GOI) holding Chair for Animal Husbandry in NDDB ; his reaction was ..." How it can be ? Nobody can go to Israel "

But I had been to Israel in 1978 !



Lessons learnt from Dr Kurien – perennial fascination

Dr VA Srinivasan, Advisor, NDDDB

It is a great honour and privilege for me to write about Dr Kurien, a great human being. There is a saying in Tamil “Poovudan serntha narum manam perum” meaning the thread which is used to prepare garland with fragrant flowers will also derive its fragrance. May be my simple interaction with him during my tenure with Indian Immunologicals Limited has made me a deserving candidate to write about Dr Kurien.

In the formative stages of Indian Immunologicals Limited, many posed the question “what NDDDB has to do with foot and mouth disease vaccine?” Since I had spent four years in NDDDB before joining Indian Immunologicals Limited in 1982, I had the patience to answer this endless question. Operation Flood programme had several components such as formation of dairy cooperatives, setting up dairy plants, animal breeding, animal nutrition etc. Animal health component was lacking. Realising the importance of animal health in dairy sector, Dr Kurien had initially set up an animal disease research laboratory called as ADRL in Anand to cater to the needs of milk shed areas in dairy cooperatives in Kaira district.

He also commissioned two important committees consisting of international scientists, economists and experts in early and mid-1970s to identify areas in animal health which need attention. The committee identified foot-and-mouth disease as an important disease which cripples farmers’ income and the economists estimated huge economic loss to the farmers and to India due to this disease. FMD was considered as an insignificant disease in India during that period. Dr Kurien took the advice of the experts for setting up a large foot-and-mouth disease vaccine plant in India seriously. He had requested FAO to advise NDDDB on the appropriate FMD vaccine production technology relevant to Indian condition. These consultations and review gave birth to the idea of setting up a foot-and-mouth disease vaccine plant with the technology from Wellcome foundation Limited, UK. Dr Kurien’s endurance and negotiation skills were responsible for getting the state-of-the art technology and subsequent establishment of a modern vaccine plant for manufacture of 25 million quadrivalent doses of FMD vaccine in Hyderabad in 1982. Dr Kurien’s foresight and boldness in establishing such a big vaccine plant was unimaginable. IIL became the second largest FMD vaccine plant in the world. His dream was to make the foot-and-mouth disease vaccine affordable to the Indian farmers. Indian Immunologicals Limited was formed in 1982. It is interesting to note that the agreement signed with Wellcome Foundation Limited in 1980 had two important components namely a guarantee on production capacity of the vaccine plant to be set up in Hyderabad and the selling price of FMD vaccine at three rupees and fifty paise per dose. The commercial FMD vaccines available in the market in 1980 were costing Rs 12 per dose. It is difficult to imagine how Dr Kurien could insist on fixing the price of vaccine at one third the price while others were selling the vaccine at Rs 12 per dose. IIL FMD vaccine was launched in November

1983 at a price of three rupees and fifty paise and other manufacturers brought down the price to two rupees and ninety paise per dose the next year. Dr Kurien's dream of making the vaccine available to the farmers at an affordable cost was realized and IIL remained as a reckoning market intervention force from then on.

Dr Kurien wanted to dispel several myths about the use of FMD vaccine and its utility in control of the disease. Several questions were raised.

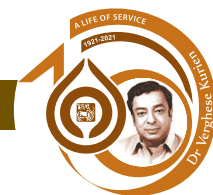
- Do we need foot-and-mouth disease vaccine?
- Will farmers' be interested in vaccinating the animals against this insignificant disease?
- How effective this vaccine will be in controlling the disease?
- What will be the cost-benefit ratio?

To answer these questions a pilot scheme for control of FMD was initiated in Ooty in 1982 which yielded good results in controlling the disease. The FMD control programme was later extended to 64 districts in Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka in 1985 in phased manner. This programme gave us several lessons with regard to cold chain in transport of vaccine, storage and administration, identification of animals by ear tagging, planning vaccination strategies, animal movement control across the states, control of Outbreaks of the disease, identification of type of virus involved in the outbreak and sero surveillance post vaccination. What procedures we are witnessing today in controlling the Pandemic COVID-19 were implemented for controlling FMD about 4 decades ago by NDDB.

A laboratory was set up in Ooty to carry out laboratory investigations and also to support the FMD control programme. Dr Kurien's involvement in setting up the FMD vaccine plant in Hyderabad and the Laboratory in Ooty was intense which clearly indicated his passion for creation of institutions of excellence.

May 3, 1982 Dr Kurien and Dr Amrita Patel were in London to discuss with Mr Shepherd, Chairman and other senior officials of the Wellcome Foundation Limited on various issues pertaining to the establishment of FMD vaccine plant in Hyderabad, assessment of training of Indian staff in Wellcome FMD vaccine plant in Pirbright, UK and future collaboration for technology transfer of other animal vaccines.

Mr Viswanath, the then GM and I were invited by Dr Kurien for a meeting in London to understand the progress of training imparted by the British staff in Pirbright. During the course of the discussion Dr Kurien enquired whether we are satisfied with the training imparted by Wellcome FMD plant staff. I could gather courage to inform them that we are confident enough to run the Wellcome FMD vaccine plant in Pirbright, UK as efficiently as the British staff if we were provided with an opportunity to do so. While appreciating our confidence, Dr Kurien cautioned us about the scenario in India which was an eye opener for me. He said 'The technicians in developed world are transparent and sincere. If they are asked to carry out a particular job, however mundane it might be, they will do it sincerely and in case they make a mistake they will either inform their superiors or write the details in the laboratory note book kept in the particular section. Whereas back in India our technicians may commit mistakes knowingly or unknowingly which will never



see the light of the day. They will not inform any one about the mistake committed by them which will put the superiors in great difficulty in seeking a solution to the problem. This piece of advice and information was very useful which forced us to take extra efforts to train our newly recruited technical staff in Hyderabad to report any untoward incident without fear of punishment. This had paid rich dividend to us that every single untoward incident or mistake was either brought to the notice of the supervisors or mentioned in the respective laboratory book.

Dr Kurien is known to be an excellent trouble shooter and offers solutions to mindboggling problems with ease and spontaneity. During the initial stages of establishment of FMD vaccine plant in Hyderabad, Welcome FMD Vaccine Quality control staff and Animal Virus Research Institute scientists insisted that the animals used for vaccine testing had to be reared in bio secure conditions without vaccinating them against FMD and the workers who are likely to look after the animals in the farm and fodder production had to be housed separately without coming in contact with the vaccine plant staff. This suggestion appeared to be an uphill task to achieve and no one had any solution to this problem. Dr Kurien was patiently listening to this conversation and after a while he said "So you want a prison inside the farm to run. Am I right?" No one in the room reacted for a while. He laughed and said the suggestion offered by the experts leads us to think about a situation like a prison and why not we have a prison inside the farm. No one reacted to his comments and everyone thought that Dr Kurien was joking. On the contrary Dr Kurien spoke with the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh and got an open air prison sanctioned for the IIL holding farm. I admired his way of thinking and implementing the ideas with ease and spontaneity. To me it looked like Dr Kurien alone can offer such novel ideas and implement them too.

Dr Amrita Patel had a piece of advice to me while taking charge of Head, Quality control of FMD vaccine plant, Hyderabad in 1982. She narrated an incident which happened in Amul to explain the importance of Quality of product in Institution headed by Dr Kurien. It appears that a big lot of butter was rejected by the QC department based on one parameter in Amul when Dr Kurien was the General Manager. The Production head requested Dr Kurien's intervention in getting the batch cleared as the batch was big and the rejection will have severe financial impact. Dr Kurien called both heads of QC and Production and advised the production head to reject the batch as release of such a batch of butter will leave adverse opinion about Amul and its products. Dr Amrita Patel told me that Dr Kurien attaches great importance to Quality of product and advised me to keep the prestige of the organization without any blemish and that IIL and its products should be synonym for high quality.

Dr Kurien took keen interest in IIL and made it a point to visit the plant once or twice in a year. On one occasion he insisted that he will visit the bio secure FMD virus production area and accordingly all arrangements were made for his visit to the production area. The biosecurity regulations stipulated dress change and no personal belonging like wrist watch, purse etc can be taken inside the production facility. Dr Kurien forgot to remove his wrist watch and as a biosecurity officer of the plant I made a request to him to remove his

watch. I also told him that the watch will be fumigated and returned back to him. He did not expect this kind of instruction from me. He removed his watch without any argument and laughingly told me that the watch is very expensive and any damage to the watch will cost my job. What to say? I cannot but admire his subtle humour and respect to the biosecurity regulations of the plant. This has left an indelible impression in the minds of all the staff of our plant.

His concern for the growth of IIL was immense. IIL was not making profits in the initial years and the dependence on one product namely “FMD vaccine” was a major road block for the progress of the institution. Dr Kurien and Dr Amrita Patel visited several countries for sourcing technology for other animal vaccines. Since their efforts did not yield the desired results it was decided to initiate in house R&D to develop vaccines and other animal health products. Dr Kurien’s moral, financial support and freedom to operate were responsible for the development and release of several animal vaccines. By the end 1990s IIL became the largest animal vaccine production plant in terms of number of products and also the revenue.

1994 was the turning point for IIL. In 1994 January Dr Kurien took a decision to bring the FMD control project to an end as he wanted the state governments of Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka to own the project. These states did not evince any interest and the project came to an abrupt end. The FMD laboratory in Ooty established by NDDB was to be handed over to the Tamil Nadu Veterinary and Animal Science University and the university was reluctant in accepting the offer. At that time I had approached the IIL management committee to consider handing over the Ooty laboratory to IIL for manufacture of human rabies vaccine. I was asked to present the case to Dr Kurien in one of the IIL Management Committee meetings in early 1994. I did not know as to how I will face Dr Kurien and present the case. I was invited to inform the management committee about the proposal. Dr Kurien saw me and said “What do you want?” I had requested Dr Kurien to consider my proposal of establishing a human rabies vaccine plant in Ooty. He thought for a while and looked at me to say go ahead. I was very happy and made another request to sanction Rs 12 crores to develop and convert the laboratory into Human rabies vaccine production facility. My joy knew no bounds when he nodded his head positively. At hindsight I realized that Dr Kurien took no time to decide two important things namely to diversify into human vaccine business and to invest huge amount without battling an eyelash. I had neither presented any detailed project proposal nor any financial analysis. What made him to believe the words of an officer of IIL is still a mystery? At the end I came to the conclusion “only Dr Kurien can do this”. Human rabies vaccine was launched in January 2000. Human rabies vaccine “Abhayrab” and foot-and-mouth disease vaccine “Raksha FMD Vaccine” are the flag ship products of IIL today.

I cannot forget the last management committee meeting of IIL which Dr Kurien chaired in NDDB, Anand in October 1998. After conclusion of the meeting we came out of the Sastri Board Room and Dr Kurien was proceeding to his chamber. He suddenly stopped and looked at Mr Balasubramaniam, the then CEO, IIL and asked Mr Balasubramaniam “Are



you going to Sabarimala” as Mr Balasubramaniam was clad in black dress.

Mr Balasubramaniam nodded his head. Dr Kurien uttered “I am an atheist. You have something to fall back during your sunset days. I have none to fall back”. We were shocked to hear this from Dr Kurien and we were speechless.

The world knows Dr Kurien as milkman of India and no one knows Dr Kurien as vaccine man of India. His contribution to vaccine industry has gone unnoticed.

Ruminating these nostalgic things make me to believe that Dr Kurien is a great teacher and a walking encyclopaedia of leadership attributes. I have learned a lot without undergoing a formal training under him and I will continue to cherish the values and virtues taught by him in my sunset years.

Before I end I would like to quote a couplet from Tirukkural

பெருமை யுடையவர் ஆற்றுவார் ஆற்றின் அருமை உடைய செயல்

Those who are bestowed with greatness will be able to perform, in the proper way, deeds difficult (for others to do).

Some Anecdotes & Experiences gathered while working with Dr Kurien

Dr N V Belavadi, former Executive Director, NDDB

1. On Accountability

It was around middle of 1976, Dr Kurien had visited Bangalore for a meeting to discuss issues related to implementation of the IDA assisted Karnataka dairy development project with the Minister and officials concerned. Subsequent to this meeting, a dinner at Hotel Ashoka, Bangalore was organised by the Government in honour of Dr Kurien. Since I was involved in this project as an officer posted in Mysore, I too was an invitee for the dinner. While awaiting arrival of the Minister at the venue, at the request of invitees present, besides narrating some of his experiences with Kaira union, Dr Kurien emphatically brought out in his brief talk the concept and salient features of Anand pattern coops. Subsequent to this there was a short question-answer session and I vividly recall the following dialogue between an IAS officer namely Shri Jairaj, (who was the Deputy Commissioner of Tumkur District) and Dr Kurien:

Shri. Jairaj: Sir, you mentioned in your talk that the Managing Director of a milk union is accountable to the elected board of the union. Is this really possible? How can we expect a well-qualified MD reporting to the Chairman and board of directors who are generally ordinary farmers with little or no education?

Dr Kurien: Mr. Jairaj, who is the boss for Chief Secretary to the Government of Karnataka?

Shri Jairaj: Sir, Chief Minister of the State

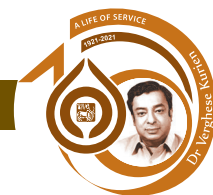
Dr Kurien: Is the Chief Minister more educated than your Chief Secretary? Is he more experienced and knowledgeable in overall administration and management? Are the Ministers in general more educated than the Secretaries to various departments and the Deputy Commissioners who are responsible for administration of activities in the districts?

Shri Jairaj: No Sir.

Dr Kurien: So, the same analogy applies here too in case of Anand pattern cooperatives. The Chairman and board of directors as representatives of farmers will bring in the knowledge and experience related to farming, are more aware of the issues and problems concerning the milk producers and are certainly in a better position to communicate with the members and ensure working towards members' hopes and aspirations. It is the job of the chief executive to guide the board, provide them with an understanding of business as a whole and enable the board in taking decisions appropriate for the organisation and its owners.

2. On ownership of dairy plant

It was some time during early 90s, there was a large 20-member delegation of some ministers and officials visiting Anand. As was the normal practice, after field visits including visit to AMUL dairy, a meeting was arranged with Dr Kurien. During this



meeting, one of the Ministers expressed that farmer could be helped in organising cooperatives and a milk union for collection of milk and supply to the existing dairy plant near Kampala (of 2 lakh litre per day capacity). He further mentioned that the dairy plant is owned and managed by the Government.

After listening to the Minister, when Dr Kurien said 'This will not work and the dairy plant's ownership too should vest with the farmer owned cooperative', the Minister asked as to why should the Government not be owning and managing the dairy plant. Dr Kurien immediately quipped '*Sir, when the King gets into business his subjects will become paupers*'. Obviously, no further question was asked.

3. On the role of board members:

Amongst various orientation/training programmes conducted by NNDDB at Anand, a three days orientation for board members of the milk union is a regular feature. Generally, after field visits and some class room sessions, before the conclusion of the orientation programme, a meeting is arranged with the Chairman. This interactive session with the Dr Kurien used to be extremely interesting and educative.

I recall here one such interactive session which the board of a large milk union from Maharashtra had with Dr Kurien sometime during early 90s.

As soon as the meeting started, the Chairman of the union stood up and thanked Dr Kurien, for the assistance being provided by NNDDB for growth and development of the union. He then went on to briefly convey about the progress made by the union and urged each of the members of the board for their self-introduction.

The next 20 minutes was engaged in each member of the board mentioning his/her name, how long he/she has been on the board, name of the village and taluka he/she belongs to and also more importantly and rather emphatically stating that he/she is a member/ chairman of one of the sub-committees constituted by the board. This whole process of introduction was very amusing to Dr Kurien particularly to know that the union board has formed various sub-committees such as Purchase committee, Marketing committee, milk procurement committee and Recruitment committee.

Once this session of introduction session was completed, Dr Kurien enquired the Chairman as to what are the tasks carried out by these committees. The Chairman looked at the MD and asked him to explain. The MD went on to explain giving the example of marketing committee where the committee members undertake visits to distributors, meetings with them and retailers at random, approve appointment of distributors/retailers, review progress etc. When the MD similarly started explaining about the purchase committee, Dr Kurien interrupted stating he has understood and asked the MD as to what do the managers of each function (marketing, purchase-----) do. The MD replied that they assist the sub-committees. Dr Kurien then asked the MD, what is your job then? The MD did not reply and probably could not think of an appropriate response.

Addressing the board members, Dr Kurien remarked that *if this is the arrangement you have decided and have been practising, you do not need a Managing Director and you also do not need any managers but just some clerical assistance to the board.*

Then he went on to explain what should the board do and not do and what should the MD and his managers be responsible for.

Theory and Practice

Dr Mukund Naware, former Senior Project Executive, NDDB

(Source: <https://www.vrikshamandir.com>)

Launch of Operation Flood-II

Sometime in 1980 a meeting/workshop was convened at NDDB Anand to discuss the modalities for implementation of Operation Flood (OF) phase II. The Phase II was to cover 155 districts and the State Dairy Federations were to be the Implementing Agencies. The phase I of OF wherein NDDB sent Spear Head Teams (SHT) was over and the idea of sending a State Coordinator for each Federation had emerged. Senior officers of NDDB and IDC who could be sent as State Coordinators were called at Anand so that greater clarity on the role that a State Coordinator was expected to play and do's and don'ts were to be discussed. I had participated from RO Bangalore.

I remember the lead speaker was Dr Malati Bolar who was invited to deliberate on the topic most appropriately titled as 'Tolerance to Ambiguity' ! She made us aware of the complex situation any organization may face and how it could be tackled by gathering experience of all.

In that workshop broader objectives of OF II including the details of the plan of action such as coverage of number of village; farmers to be brought under the ambit of the cooperatives; milch animals to be brought under Animal Health Care; AI Centers to be established using frozen semen; animals to be covered so as to raise National Milch Herd that would ultimately increase the per capita milk availability etc. were shared.

On the next day towards the end of our program we had a meeting with Dr. Kurien , Chairman NDDB/IDC. All the senior officers of both the organizations were also present.

State level federations under Operation Flood-II

Dr. Kurien told us why the idea of having State Cooperative Federation was mooted. In his opinion the State Dairy Corporations had become bureaucracies and that there was a need to replace them with Farmers' Organisation, a Federation at the start of the project itself so that in future there would not be questions raised on transfer of milk processing plants to unions and the farmers will retain their rights. He also briefly explained the important provisions in the proposed Memorandum of Understanding to be signed like a State Govt., guarantee for repayment of loan, setting up of Audit Board etc.

Towards the end we were asked questions if we had any doubt or clarifications to seek. There was some response but I remember one question very well.

One participant mentioned that the broad objective of OF II was to raise milk availability through genetic improvement in cows and buffaloes for which a massive effort would be made using frozen semen technology and paraphernalia.



He further elaborated, that this effort could be useful only if there is culling of cows and buffaloes and the culling means eliminating the inferior stock from the herd at every stage which every breeding program taken up anywhere in the world has acknowledged. This question was indirectly touching the issue of cow slaughter. The questioner then requested the Chairman why this particular aspect was missing in the project and why this is also not been raised at Govt. level.

Have patience and change will happen

Dr. Kurien replied to that question citing a couple of examples which were quite interesting. First he mentioned about a certain delegation from Pakistan that had come to India to study dairy development in India. On completion of their visit to Anand they came to meet Dr. Kurien. However, when they were about to leave he found one of the delegates in tears.

When Dr. Kurien enquired about the reason the delegate said that he was moved by the efforts made by India in dairying. The delegate had said that ' both Pakistan and India became independent at the same time but India did well in preserving dairy breeds whereas in Pakistan they have eaten away most of the cattle.' Citing this, Dr. Kurien said that we should look positively on issues like this.

Citing the second case, Dr. Kurien said he worked with Chairman Shri Tribhuvandas Patel who was a Gandhian worker and followed all its principles like a religion.

"Shri Patel was hundred percent Vegetarian and I have no doubt about it whereas, the same can not be said about his son who went to US and settled there. He may or may not have tasted meat. But if you ask me about the grandson of Tribhuvandas Patel who is born and brought up there I would not be surprised if eating meat may have become a routine for him, unless he decides against doing so", he said. "This is what happens over the generations."

Dr. Kurien continued. "People will change , we have to give time. As it is we have been asking for so many changes. But if you ask too many changes, then the easiest thing for them is that they will change you. Therefore you have to have patience that one day or the other change will be there."

Dr. Kurien told his Mantra and with that the meeting ended.

Remembering Dr Kurien

Shri MK Sinha, ex-Deputy Director, NDDDB

मैं और मेरे जैसे अनेक लोग जो डा कुरियन के सान्निध्य में आए, मेरी समझ के अनुसार, उनका संबंध “विक्रमादित्य” और “बैताल” की तरह का है।

हर बार उस बैताल के चरित्र के एक पहलू को किसी एक पीपल के पेड़ पर टांग कर आते हैं। वही बैताल एक बिल्कुल नये चरित्र में हमारे कंधे पर बैठ कर नये सवाल सामने रख देता है। आज करीब पचास साल के बाद भी!

मैं अपने को भाग्यशाली समझता हूँ कि इस व्यक्तित्व के कुछ पहलू को जो मैं देख पाया और जो शायद कुछ के ही नसीब में आया हो, हो सकता है नहीं भी आया हो। वह था उनका बाल सुलभ निर्दोष व्यवहार और बाल हठ।

हालांकि, उनका यह पहलू मेरे एन डी डी बी छोड़ने और अमूल ज्वायन करने के बाद की हैं कुछ यादें।

1. फरबरी, 1970, बरौनी मेरा पहला साक्षात्कार!

डा कुरियन और डा एस सी रे। बरौनी में एक घास होती है। नौनी। पूरे जमीन पर फैल जाती है। पीले फूलों से लदी हुई। सारी धरती हल्दी से प्रकृति ने पुताई कर दी हो। डा कुरियन ने डा रे से पूछा “कान्ट वी हैव दिस इन एन डी बी कैम्पस? नो डाक्टर यू कान्ट हैव एनी थिंग एनी वेयर”। दोनों ने एक दूसरे को देखा निर्दोष मुस्कुराहट और चल पड़े।

2. दिसम्बर 1975, क्रिसमस का दिन

तब एन डी डी बी कैम्पस में शायद तीस या बत्तीस परिवार ही रह रहे होंगे। दो क्रिकेट टीमों बनीं। कुरियन इलेवन और वरियावा इलेवन। हम सब खेतीवाड़ी ग्राउंड में इकट्ठे हुये। दोनों नौन प्लेइंग कैप्टेन अपनी अपनी टीम के साथ। एकाएक डा कुरियन ने मुझसे पूछा। कैन आइ गो एन्ड बैट? “आइ वान्ट टू शो निर्मला दैट आई ऐम स्टिल यंग एन्ड कैन बैट। बट आई मस्ट टेक परमिसन आफ द कैप्टेन”! और वह गए। इन फुल पैड अप। और पूरे सम्मान से खेला। बालसुलभ!

3. 14 जनवरी 1975, उत्तरायण

एन डी डी बी कैम्पस में रहने वाले लोग सामने के मैदान में पतंग उड़ाने में लीन। सब बच्चे समेत अपनी अपनी पतंग उड़ाने में मस्त। यकायक डा कुरियन अपने परिवार के साथ शामिल। उनकी पतंग किसी ने काट दिया। दूसरी पतंग उपर। एक बच्चे के पास आए। उसका नाम पूछा। उसके बाप का नाम पूछा। अपना पतंग दिया और कहा “इफ यू लूज दिस काइट, योर फादर विल लूज हिज जॉब”। वह बच्चा दौड़ता हुआ मेरे पास आया और पूछा “पापा ये कौन आदमी है”? मैं क्या समझाऊँ और किसे समझाऊँ?

4. औपरेशन फ्लड टू का शुरुआती समय

एफ ए ओ एडवाइजर्स के लिये लक्जरी गाड़ियों में से एक आस्ट्रेलियन होल्डन। निहायत खूबसूरत। देखा। मुझसे कहा कौल मौली। आइ वान्ट टू ड्राइव हर ऐज माई फर्स्ट कोपेसेन्जर। मौली आई। मौली, यू सिट बाई माई साईड। आस्क दिस फेलो टू सिट बिहाइंड। आई विल टेक यू राउंड द कैम्पस। ड्राइविंग सीट पर मानो एक निर्दोष बच्चा ट्राय कार पर खेल रहा हो। “मौली, यू सी ईट हैज पावर स्टीयरिंग। यू प्रेस दिस बटन एन्ड ऐन एन्टिना पौप्स आउट”। मौली चुपचाप सब सुनती रही। बस, हूँ, यस जौली। कैम्पस का चक्कर लगाया और औफिस के सामने ला कर रोक दिया। शायद रजनी ड्राइवर खड़ा था। मैडम को घर छोड़ दो। और मुझसे, “यू नो, दिस कार नीड्स वाईट पेट्रोल, एन्ड माई कार शुड नौट स्टॉप ए सिग्नल डे”। उस जमाने में आनंद में व्हाइट पेट्रोल? लेकिन व्हाइट पेट्रोल आया। गाड़ी कभी नहीं रुकी। कैसे हुआ, यह एक अलग कहानी।

5. निर्मला की शादी

कितने सारे लोग आमंत्रित थे। उनमें एक सैयद भाई भी थे, उनके पहले ड्राइवर। मुझे बुलाया 'सी दैट ही इज ट्रीटेड नौ वे इन्फिरीयर टू एनी वन हीयर। फौर मी ही इज़ द वी वी आइ पी फौर द डे'। सैयद मियां के लिए अलग टेबल लगाया, एटेन्ड किया और जब जाने लगे, उन्हें बुलाया "थैन्क यू सैयद भाई"! सैयद भाई मुझे बिल्कुल स्पीचलेस। बस आंखें नम थीं।

लेकिन इस विशाल व्यक्तित्व को करीब से पहचानने का मौका मुझे एन डी डी बी छोड़ने और अमूल ज्वायन करने पर मिला, उनके साथ, उनके परिवार के साथ साक्षात, और उन सारे लोगों से आत्मीय बात कर के। उनमें आदरणीय त्रिभुवन काका, श्री रमन शंकर पटेल, श्री मनुभाई डाह्या भाई पटेल और श्री बाबूभाई गिरिधर भाई पटेल और श्री एच एम दलाया। सन 1987 से 2000 तक इनका सामीप्य मिला। घंटों साथ में बैठता, सुनता, प्योर, औनेस्ट, प्रिस्टीन, नौस्टैल्जिक रिवर्स चरनी औन टाइम।

एक ऐसी ही बैठक में त्रिभुवन काका के साथ। "सींहा, कुरियन ने कोई औढखी सक्या नथी। एनु व्यक्तित्व एक नानो बालक जेवु। निष्कपट, निर्दोष, चंचल। कदी शान्त नही बेसी शके। लोको एने ज़िद्दी कहे छै। आ ज़िद्दी नथी, हठी छे। पण एनो हठ बालहठ। एक रमकड़ा मणी जाए तो बस खुश खुश। जूना समय मां मारी पासे बेसता। खबर नहीं शूं शूं अफलातून बिचार। हूं एने समझावतो, कुरियन अमे महासमर मां छीए। मने वचन दे एवी चर्चा सामान्य रीते अने सामान्य जग्या नहीं करवानी। अने ए आजीवन निभाव्या"।

श्री रमनभाई शंकर भाई पटेल "सींहा, तू केनी बाबत जानवा ईच्छे छे, कुरियन बाबत? अरे एना बिचारो ना उंढापण, अमे नथी समझी शक्या तो तु तो एक नाना बालक जेवो छे। अगम्य, अथाह पण मापी न सकाए एवो सारगर्भित"।

मनुभाई डाह्याभाई पटेल "सींहा अमे राजकारणीया छीए। अमारी कार्यशैली तमने खबर होय। पण कुरियन! आ बाबत मां एनी समझ अने चपणता अमे समझी नहीं शक्या"।

बाबूभाई गिरिधरभाई पटेल कुरियन एनक्लेव और एक जमाने में कंजरी कैटलफीड फैक्टरी पर आने वाले सामान पर टोल टैक्स पूरी तरह माफ करने वाला शख्स, बस "एक बात, कुरियन नो प्रश्न छे न। पूछवानो नही, विचारवानो नहीं"

ऐसा व्यक्तित्व, विरला!

This is how I remember Dr Kurien

Shri Narendra B Vashi, Managing Director, Valsad Milk Union

In the Era of Liberalisation and Globalisation, the Dairy Sector was thrown open to private operators, which was so far protected for Cooperatives and Government. Taking advantage of this, many dairies had come up in the country. The Giant FMCG, Walls entered in to manufacturing and distribution of Ice cream by acquiring a well-known Kwaliti ice cream business, initially to manufacture frozen desserts and marketing it to consumers perceiving it as ice cream.

Dr Kurien as a visionary realized that such giants after establishing and setting up cold chain, would soon enter into manufacturing and market other dairy products such as powder, butter, cheese, dairy whiteners etc. initially by importing. These products were our bread and butter earner at that time. Such competitors should be given tough reply, particularly when we have good quality fresh milk and network of pan India marketing.

Meanwhile GCMMF had carried out a market survey which clearly indicated that Amul should have ice cream in its product portfolio. This finding also prompted Dr Kurien to execute quick and time bound plans to manufacture ice cream. At that time, for Amul ice cream, Sugam Dairy, managed by NDDDB was the only manufacturing unit. The initial grand success of marketing Amul ice cream in Ahmedabad and Surat city crystallized Dr Kurien's decision to go to Mumbai first and ultimately throughout the country.

An opportunity came knocking the door about the sale of ice cream plant of Vadilal situated at Boisar. Dr Kurien immediately thought of Valsad Union which did not have any product to market under Amul brand. He knew about the Valsad Union and more so about its Chairman, Mr Moghabhai Desai, who was open to new ideas. He called Mr Moghabhai and told him if he would be willing to acquire the plant at Boisar and start Ice cream manufacturing. Mr Moghabhai told him that he is ready and afterward he discussed the matter with me.

Dr Kurien desired to meet the Manager of Valsad Union before taking any decision. That is how I got an opportunity to meet and face Dr. Kurien. Next day I was called at Anand by Mr B M Vyas, then Managing Director of GCMMF. I, along with Mr B M Vyas and Mr M N Vyas went to meet Dr Kurien. Dr Kurien looked at me and asked a pointed question, "How far Boisar is from your place?" I replied 140 KMs, Sir. Then he asked, "whether you will be able to manage the plant situated at quite a distance from your place". I, with a confident voice told "Sure Sir, Why Not". Then he asked "what else?" I said we do not have money to buy the Plant. Dr Kurien said, "do not worry about money, NDDDB will help you out." He looked at me through his experienced eyes the confidence I displayed. He told; "B M Vyas, he seems to have full confidence, arrange the Plant for him".

I was stunned and impressed with the quick decision and judging capabilities of Dr Kurien. Hats off to the Great Visionary Man. Not to mention, what happened to Kwaliti Walls and Amul Ice cream becoming the No.1 brand in India.



My destiny with dairying: From rags to riches, the magic of white gold

Shri Sangram R Chaudhary, Managing Director, Banas Milk Union, Palanpur

Dairy farming was almost certainly written into my destiny from the moment I was born. In the 1960s, I was born in a small hamlet in Mehsana, but the significance of my birth lies in the fact that I was born in our backyard buffalo manger—the source of origin of milk, or any dairy product for that matter. I was born into a poor farmer family and grew up in a mud-house with earthen tiles. We were a family of five siblings, and we rarely ate more than two meals per day. We had two buffaloes in our house, and I can still remember how warm it was sleeping next to my buffalo during the winters. After hearing this, one might conclude that I was destined to be a dairyman, but I am convinced that it was none other than Dr Verghese Kurien who shaped my dairying destiny.

My first encounter with Dr. Kurien happened when I was eight years old, though it was not a face-to-face encounter. I saw his picture in our village cooperative society, where we used to go to pour milk. I had no idea that this man would be the architect of my future, and that I would end up working in the dairy industry.

I decided to prepare for the civil services examinations after completing my B.Sc. in Biochemistry from St. Xavier's College in Ahmedabad and my post-graduation from Gujarat University. Apart from three IIMs and a few private institutes, India had few management institutes at the time. Everyone on campus was talking about IRMA, which was a relatively new but well-regarded institute. So, my friends and I decided to take the IRMA entrance exam, and I received a fellowship to study at IRMA in 1984. It was here that I had my second encounter with Dr. Kurien, this time in person when he came to speak to our class. I was immediately reminded of a photograph of a gentleman I had seen at our village cooperative society years before. As my curiosity grew, I learned more about him and his work. Dr. Kurien used to come to IRMA almost every day, take a walk around campus, and occasionally interact with students. He had a commanding presence and a towering personality.

I appeared for the campus placements at IRMA and was offered jobs by Gujarat Dairy Development Corporation and Gujarat Oilseed Growers Federation, but rejected the latter one, the reason being that the posting offered was in Vapi, a place in Gujarat notoriously famous for chemical pollution. Finally, on March 11th, 1986, I joined GDDC, and thus my dairy career began. Someone from a poor family like me would never have been able to study there if it hadn't been for IRMA fellowship. Dr. Kurien was an outstanding institution builder. He has developed world's best rural management school, and his contributions to the agrarian rural sector are immeasurable.

Milk is what I call "white gold," and it has its own enchantment. Cows and buffaloes, in my opinion, are the best friends that rural people can have. Whatever you give them

multiplies and returns to you; if you give love, they return love; if you feed them, they return milk; and if you look after them, they look after you. Cow-based farming was once the norm in this country, and humans and cattle have had a long and symbiotic relationship dating back 10,000 years. Milk has brought magic into my life, and it has brought magic into the lives of millions of others as well. Dr. Kurien's efforts in the Operation White Flood programme are responsible for India's current status as the world's largest milk producer. As a result, we are no longer dependent on milk powder import from milk producing western nations, and the credit for this goes to none other than Dr Kurien.

I've always been a learner, and I continue to learn every day. Despite the fact that I was working as a marketing manager in Kutch after joining GDDC, I spent half of my day at the plant trying to learn and understand how milk is processed, and that knowledge came in handy later when I was working as a general manager and then as the chief executive officer of Banas Dairy.

I had multiple interactions with Dr. Kurien, and the most significant thing I recall learning from him was the importance of punctuality. I am proud to say that I am never late and am always ahead of schedule wherever I go, and this is something I picked up from him. I recall Dr. Kurien paying a visit to Madhavrao Scindia, India's then-railway minister, on one such occasion. He arrived on time, but the PA asked him to wait a few minutes because the minister was preoccupied with someone else. He said that, just as the minister's time is valuable, his time is valuable as well, because he represents the country's farmers. He knew the significance of time because breathing was synonymous with time to him, therefore he always emphasized it, and that is one virtue that has aided me.

Dr. Kurien's impeccable integrity in everything what you do and what you say is the most important thing I've learned from him. Even if you happen to lose something, be very honest with yourself and be honest with everybody else." That's one thing that Dr Kurien looked very strictly at.

He was a very kind-hearted person, and also very jovial and witty about everything. He always loved to crack jokes which left us in splits. I had an opportunity to interact with him as the Chairman of GCMMF for about 11 years. He used to come and talk to us for at least half an hour every month when we had programming committee meetings, and he used to tell us about the history of all the milk co-operatives, how he struggled with Amul in the early days, stories of how he created buffalo milk powder, and all those stories. I recall one time when he was standing on the third floor of the GCMMF office and the late Mehsana dairy Chairman, the great gentleman, Motibhai Chaudhary, was conversing with him, and I believe he was simply commenting on the GCMMF office tiles. "Dr Kurien, you are laying very expensive tiles," he said. "If the gold tiles were available, I would have put gold tiles," Dr. Kurien replied. That was the standard that Dr. Kurien instilled in us. He had always aspired to provide the farmers nothing but the best.

Another event that comes to my mind is when I first arrived in Banaskantha. We had 1 lakh litres of milk and a revenue of roughly Rs 70 crores. We went to NDDB in desperate need of a new 60-ton dryer. Given that we don't have that much milk, everyone



questioned the need for a 60-ton dryer. Dr. Kurien inquired if I was confident during all of these discussions and negotiations, to which I replied, "Yes Sir." "Let them build a 60-ton powder factory," he remarked after looking me in the eyes."

One other memory I have of him that is unrelated to the other instances and this was regarding the chairmanship of IRMA. I went to Dr. Kurien and told him that I disagree with him. So he looked at me, and I told him flat out, "Dr. Kurien, you are God to me, yet I disagree with you." "Do you think so?" he asked, looking at me. "Yes, sir," I replied. He didn't say a thing to me. He said "Okay. Thank you. Go". That was his magnanimity, to accept even a young man's dissent.

Why am I using the phrase "rags to riches"? I came from a marginal farmer's family and at beginning of my career my most valuable possessions were my 50 kg books, some of them picked up from Fernandes Bridge, Ahmedabad, all the teaching material from IRMA and few pads of clothes. The initial salary which I received was Rs. 2000 in 1986. My salary was also low when I moved to Palanpur. I couldn't afford to pay my children's school fees. But Dr Kurien and millions of my farmer brothers, sisters and their bovine friends have made me rich and have also transformed fortunes of millions of other people. Today I am a high net worth individual.

Banaskantha is a saga of milk transforming people's lives. We started with one lakh litres of milk and now receive eight million. This year, if not, next year, we will receive 10 million litres of milk and in 2025-26, we will receive 15 million litres of milk. I had the opportunity to visit New Zealand and saw a 14 million litre facility there, and I wondered if anything similar could be built in India. I am pleased to announce that my dream will soon become a reality.

Dr Kurien's dream of true development and socio-economic development of people at grass root through Dairying has come true in Banaskantha District. There are thousands of men and women who live life of Health & Happiness through the magic of this white gold – the Milk. Last year Banaskantha paid

Rupees 10,000 Crores of farm gate prices to 3,70,587 milk producers in return of their Milk. I firmly believe that the credit goes to farmers of Banaskantha and their wisdom.

“My job is to sow the seeds when the land is fertile and the rains come,” Dr. Kurien said at one of the IRMA convocations. “It’s destiny that will decide whether some of the seeds will sprout and work for the poor agrarian people of the country, and some may not, and some may, become weeds, but I must sow these seeds.” These seeds, I believe, have been sown and some of them have been sown well. My destiny is made by milk.

Dr. Kurien shaped my fate, and whatever I am now is thanks to him; his impact to my life is immeasurable and unquantifiable. Dr. Kurien was a visionary leader who was always enthusiastic about and supportive of innovation. Safal (Mother Dairy) was his idea, and now the newly constituted Ministry of Cooperatives wants cooperatives to organise fruit and vegetable processing, a concept he had conceived much earlier. Value addition in agricultural products is the way to go if we want to double our farmers’ income.

When I graduated from IRMA, I wrote down “bringing smiles to people’s faces and making my children valuable citizens of the country” as my mission statement. I believe I am almost there, and I will continue to work toward it as long as I am alive. One of my most recent assignments at Banas Dairy is to harvest happiness and make everyone work joyfully. We’ve evolved from IQ to EQ, and now we’ve arrived at SQ, or spiritual quotient. I want people to understand that happiness is a mental state and that happiness is found within.

In any case, you are indebted to your parents for your physical existence, but you are indebted to your teachers for your mental build-up, your intelligence build-up, and your professional skills. So, I think he’s (Dr Kurien) been a great teacher. He’s been a great mentor and he has touched millions of lives in this country, which is remembering him today. I pay my utmost respect to him.

Long Live Dr Kurien.....

How much do I pay?

Shri G. Rajan, former Executive, NDDB

(Source: <https://www.vrikshamandir.com>)



It was around 10 am or so on a normal office day. I was busy opening the envelopes of incoming “Dak”, sorting papers and identifying those to be put up to the Secretary, NDDB, who was busy in a meeting, and those that were to be marked to departments directly.

I was surprised to see Shri TK Patel assisted by his attendant Jayantibhai, slowly walking into my office.

It surely was an awkward situation for me as I never expected Shri TK Patel coming into my office room (PS to Secretary).

Shri TK Patel, for those who may not know, was the founder Chairman, Kheda District Milk Producers Union Ltd and Guru of Dr. Kurien. He normally would visit office of Dr Kurien to meet him.

Seeing Patel Saheb, I immediately got up from my chair and greeted him;

“Namaste Saheb”

“Bhai, I want two copies of this paper.”

“Ok Saheb”, I said taking the paper from his hands, photocopied and returned the same to him in quick succession.

“How much do I have to pay?”

I was shocked as I was not expecting this query.

“That is okay Sir”, I said

“It is not okay” was the response of Tribhuvandas Bhai.

“If you don’t tell me how much I have to pay, then I will go and ask Kurien” he said.

I was in a fix. I did not know how much to charge as there was no such system was then in place.!!

I rang up Shri Rangwala, Treasurer, NDDB to seek his guidance. He too was perplexed and surprised as this was a peculiar query.

“I will call you back” said Rangwala Saheb.

As I waited for the return call Shri TK Patel patiently waited in the waiting area of Secretaries office. After some time Rangwala Saheb called back.

“Rajan, I checked with my colleagues, we can charge him 0.50 paise for the two copies (25 paise per copy)”

I conveyed this to Patel Saheb. He nodded his head in agreement and pushed a fifty paise coin into my hand. I thought the matter ended there.!

“Give me receipt for the fifty paise.”

This time I did not take a chance and requested Shri Rangwala to help, he rushed an assistant to me with the receipt for Rs.0.50 paise which I handed over to Patel Saheb who was in the waiting area.

He said “Abhar” to me and slowly walked out with Jayantibhai.

I can never forget such an incident which has influenced me in many ways.

Great peoplegreat thoughts, they lived for others. Persons with integrity प्रामाणिक मानुष!

I feel privileged and fortunate that I had occasions to meet such people during my work life.



Memories of Dr Kurien

Dr DV Ghanekar, ex-Managing Director, Kolhapur Milk Union

This incident depicts the humane side of Dr. V. Kurien, who was known as very strict disciplinarian. I was at NDDDB, Mumbai during the period 1987 up to 1997. While in Mumbai, Dr. Kurien would always stay at NDDDB penthouse on 10th floor of NDDDB residential building at Goregaon complex. NDDDB Mumbai site is one of the best locations. Some would describe it as mini Hong Kong of Mumbai.

Dr. E. Madhavan was Residential Director of NDDDB Mumbai regional office. He was very particular in his work. During the visit of Dr. Kurien to the campus Dr. Madhavan was particular that, there should not be any issue or problem. He would instruct administrative officer Shri. Subbu Reddy for taking precaution about cleanliness, hygiene, sanitation etc. in and around office building, residential complex and the penthouse in particular. Then just before the visit of Chairman, NDDDB, Dr. Madhavan would personally check whether everything was spic and span. He was so particular that he would make sure that there should not be any dust even on the sides of the windows. On the visit day, the cable network in residential complex would specially run children's movie. The idea was that not a single kid should be seen on the green lush lawn. But, unfortunately, on this particular day, when Dr. Kurien arrived from airport, despite the movie, the children were playing on the lawn. The senior officer who was on duty, hiding behind the pillar thought that now Dr. Kurien would get angry. However, everybody was surprised that Dr. Kurien got off from the car and was observing children playing on the lawn. Dr. Kurien stood there looking at them. Some of them who were bold enough approached Dr. Kurien and called him "Kurien uncle" and asked him 'Uncle can we have ride in your car?'. Dr. Kurien readily agreed and asked the driver to give them ride in and around NDDDB campus. The children were hilarious that day, and the parents would narrate this story to their friends and relatives umpteen number of times. It was really a memorable day for NDDDB Mumbai campus otherwise during the visit of Dr. Kurien the campus used to look deserted as if curfew was imposed. But, since then, everybody saw the other side too of Dr. V. Kurien.

Wall between NDDDB and Mahanand

During Operation Flood-I programme, Shri. Vasantdada Patil was the Chief Minister of Maharashtra. The first meeting held at Mantralaya, Mumbai was in a huge meeting hall in 1971. There were at least 25 officers of different departments including the dairy development present. In the meeting, there was discussion about how NDDDB will provide funds for two district level projects in Maharashtra and funds also for development of Mother Dairy in Mumbai and for Worli Dairy. A 4th dairy which was later called 'Mahanand Dairy' was planned to be established in Aarey colony. NDDDB proposed that the dairy would be constructed by NDDDB's engineering department, and also portion of

the land be given for establishing NDDB's regional office and some godowns for storing milk products and butter oil which were being imported from European Economic Commission (EEC).

As usual, department officials were not in favour of giving free land to NDDB for establishing regional office. In the meeting, the Chief Minister Shri. Vasantdada Patil who was only 7th std. pass, but who had tremendous common sense, told officers that he was in favour of giving land to NDDB. He questioned to them why Dr. Kurien who came all the way from Gujarat and was offering them subsidies for establishing dairy in Mumbai and 100% subsidy for establishing dairy co-operatives in the villages of Maharashtra? Shri. Vasantdada Patil also said that, after all, NDDB was not a private company. NDDB was a part of Govt. of India and despite that, why officers were looking at them with suspicion as if they were a private company or they had come from foreign country. He further said even if the projects failed, the NDDB after spending so much money, was not going to take away the land back to Gujarat. The land always remains here as it is, and therefore, he did not find any problem in handing over part of the Aarey colony land for establishing NDDB's regional office. This is how the regional office of NDDB was established in Mumbai.

After several years, while Shri. Sharad Pawar was Chief Minister of Maharashtra, in the year 1995, there was one Govt. officer Dr. Patil who was looking after Mahanand Dairy as a General Manager. Dr. Patil did not like NDDB. He, suddenly, took the stand that the land on which NDDB office was established was belonging to Mahanand dairy, and he sent notice to NDDB stating that, he will break the wall between NDDB office and Mahanand dairy, and milk tankers would ply on NDDB roads. This proposal was not accepted by the NDDB office at Mumbai, because the Mumbai office also had residential complex, and if the tankers started plying on the same road then it would have created problems for the residential staff and their children.

First of all, NDDB officers approached the local district collector at Borivali to find out what was the legal status. It was found that the land was not handed over to NDDB officially, and it remained part of unit No. 12 of Aarey Colony and on the drawing of revenue department, there was just a small demarcation showing Mahanand Dairy and NDDB offices were separated. With great efforts, NDDB could manage to move the papers at the district collector's office, so that the land was properly demarcated, and NDDB's name was shown separately on the revenue records. Once this was done, NDDB approached the Commissioner, Dairy Development Secretary, but they could not help, and the tussle between NDDB and Mahanand Dairy continued for several months.

Ultimately, the matter was taken up with Dr. V. Kurien at NDDB, Anand. He was briefed by Dr. Madhavan about what was going on. Dr. Kurien simply asked to prepare a draft letter to Chief Minister of Maharashtra. We drafted the letter narrating the whole story and how a small issue has been unnecessarily raised which has created tussle between NDDB and Mahananda Dairy for no reason. Shri. Sharad Pawar was also briefed by us at his residence while handing over letter to him. Soon a letter was issued by Chief Minister himself stating that the matter has been brought to his notice, and henceforth the issue was closed. Since then, till date, nobody has raised this issue against NDDB's regional office in Mumbai.



Such was the power of Dr. Kurien's relationship at the highest level in the government. Even those who used to oppose Dr. Kurien, were equally great admirers of Dr. Kurien and the values he stood for, and therefore, despite so many odds, NDDB could achieve its goals.

Inauguration of Dhara Oil Pouch at NDDB, Mumbai

One fine morning, NDDB Mumbai office received a message from Dr. Kurien directly. He instructed that by 10th April, 1992 he would like to start the 'Dhara Oil' packaging plant at Mumbai. At that point of time, there were few godowns where Amul's products were kept and also there was a high profile NDDB lab which was housed within the godown. The unit no. 12 of Aarey colony was originally meant for keeping cattle. Now, instead of cattle, NDDB had converted the area into Dhara Oil tank farm, where about a million litre of oil was being stored. Those days, NDDB was receiving imported soyabean oil from Canada. Shri. N.K. Biswas and myself were entrusted for preparation of inaugural event. At that time, Shri. Ashok Shrivastav, head of the engineering department was busy in erecting packaging station. All the activities started simultaneously with great hurry.

Dr. Kurien had developed very strong friendship with Shri. Sudhakar Rao Naik, the then Chief Minister of Govt. of Maharashtra. Therefore, he wanted Chief Minister, Maharashtra to come personally to inaugurate 'Dhara Oil' packaging station managed by NDDB. We approached Shri. Sudhakar Rao Naik and he readily agreed for the suitable date. The date was also suitable to Dr. V. Kurien. Dr. Kurien desired that farmers from all over the Maharashtra, particularly women farmers should be called for inaugural function. Even farmers from nearby Gujarat district were also proposed to be invited. We planned to bring around 10,000 farmers from rural areas of Maharashtra and Gujarat. This was a huge task. All the unions were informed about our Intent. They also readily agreed. When the farmers were coming from long distance, naturally we needed to arrange for their lodging, boarding and transport. In place like Mumbai, it is impossible to arrange accommodation for so many farmers. Therefore, the entire planning was done in such a way that farmers would lodge themselves within vicinity of Mumbai and would start early in the morning after getting fresh, so that, they reach for the inaugural function at about 10.00 a.m. in the morning. On the way at highway for each bus, we arranged breakfast for the farmers and once the inaugural function was over, they were handed over lunch packets.

The staff members and other children in the NDDB campus also participated in the event by doing their own bit. My daughter Ashlesha was also part of the team which welcomed the Chief Minister. The girls wore traditional Maharashtrian dress. The whole event was charged with tremendous enthusiasm on the part of organizers. I was given the additional responsibility of translating Dr. Kurien's speech on the Dias. Dr. Kurien spoke in his usual extempore style narrating how Anand Pattern was successful in Gujarat and Maharashtra and some other states, and how equally he intends to take this pattern in other areas such as oil seeds growers co-operatives.

Entire function was conducted with clockwork precision. Farmers showed utmost discipline, and there was no confusion during entire session. All the volunteers and the organizers worked methodically. Even after the function was over, there was no debris or

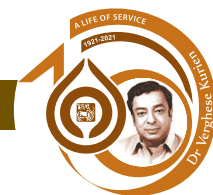
pouches littered on the ground. Such was the management of entire function. Shri. N.K. Biswas was working overtime to get all the preparation done meticulously. Dr. Madhavan was very happy when the entire function was smoothly conducted and was completed without any aberration. The entire event was organized on behalf of Indian Oil Seed Growers Co-operative Federation. I was standing on the side of Dr. Kurien and was continuously translating Dr. Kurien's words into Marathi language. I was used to do so because in the past I had translated for Dr. Kurien during his visits on several occasions. Later, Dr. Kurien and Shri. Sudhakar Rao Naik, Chief Minister had lunch together at famous penthouse on 10th floor of residential complex at NDDB, Mumbai. It was a memorable day for entire staff who worked day and night to make the event successful in the history of NDDB campus. It was probably the first such event where so many numbers of farmers along with Chief Minister visited the campus. It was a big show of how NDDB employees work in unison with the farmers of Maharashtra. Shri. Sudhakar Rao Naik was very impressed by the entire celebration.

Kale Memorial Lecture at Pune

In the year 1992, Dr. Kurien was invited by Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics Affairs, Pune to give lecture as a part of "Kale Memorial Lecture". I do not understand why I was assigned this job of receiving Dr. V. Kurien at Pune airport. Generally, the Resident Director, NDDB, Mumbai would have received. One reason probably was that Dr. Kurien never liked NDDB's officer to come to airport to receive him. However, occasion was such that, he did not know the place where Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics Affairs, Pune was located, and those were days when GPS was not operational. He was accompanied by his wife Mrs. Molly Kurien also. Mrs. Poonawala, Chairman, Alfa Laval had also come at the airport, Pune. Looking at me, Dr. Kurien told his wife rather sarcastically in his typical Kurien style "here comes NDDB's spy, NDDB guys do not leave me alone, they want to know what I am doing in Pune". I could only smile and look sideways sheepishly. I told him that I have come to show him direction for reaching Gokhale Institute, Pune, and further, I told him that, the Chairman, Katraj Dairy, Pune has invited him to visit Katraj dairy, which he readily agreed. He always wanted to be connected with milk producers and was very keen in knowing what is happening at ground level.

We first, went to Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics Affairs, where he gave long speech on 'Agriculture and Rural Development in 1990's and beyond: What should India do and why?' The audience was spellbound by his oratory and his usual extempore Kurien style. His description of Anand Pattern, how he developed it in Anand, his usual oblique comments on IAS officers and bureaucracy and his pro-farmer views, etc. were applauded by the audience.

Later, we moved to Katraj Dairy. Dr. Kurien was very relaxed and casual with board of directors of Katraj Dairy. He was very friendly with them. He went around the dairy which was by his standard, a small dairy. He listened to their demands and promised them to help.



Board of Directors of Katraj Dairy requested some funds which, we NDDB officers had not agreed. But, Dr. Kurien said that he would look into the matter. While returning, he asked me why NDDB was holding funds to Katraj Dairy. I explained him the reasons. Though he agreed to my views, he suggested NDDB should find ways to help them. On returning to Mumbai office, I spoke with Dr. E. Madhavan and we did our best to help Katraj dairy to come out of their problems.

I could see many aspects of Dr. Kurien's personality during his visit to Pune. In one moment, he was a caring husband, whereas in front of erudite Professors of Gokhale Institute, he was talking philosophy, whereas in another setting at Katraj dairy, he was friend of milk producers, very sensitive towards their needs and was ready to be flexible. He was very powerful leader with great sensitivity for the cause of milk producers.

Khurody v/s. Dr. Kurien

Names of three organizations Polson, Amul and Aarey Milk Colony, two cities Bombay and Anand, and three individuals Shri. Tribhuvandas Patel, Dr. V. Kurien and Shri. D. N. Khurody always finds a place in any narrative on early history of dairy development in India.

Maharashtra and Gujarat were part of Bombay state till reorganization of states on linguistic basis in 1960. Both the states are financially strong and relatively more industrialized compared to other states in India. However, there has always been a competition on many aspects of human life and development between Maharashtra and Gujarat.

Dr. V. Kurien used to say that Amul could develop only because of the Bombay market. Mr. D. N. Khurody, Dairy Commissioner of the erstwhile Bombay state, in early fifties, along with Shri. Tribhuvandas Patel and Dr. V. Kurien received Ramon Magsaysay Award for Community Leadership 1964. While Mr. Khurody, founder of Aarey Milk Colony is known for promoting milk colony based development of dairying to meet city milk demand, Shri. Tribhuvandas Patel and Dr. V. Kurien set up Amul which promoted Anand Pattern of dairy development which laid emphasis on milk production in rural milk sheds for supply to urban areas.

The Bombay approach to dairy development and Anand Pattern of dairy development were not in sync with each other in some key areas. Over time these differences in approach led to opposition for the sake of opposition and resulted in delaying or stalling of Operation Flood Projects by lower rungs of dairy development department in spite of a general agreement to go ahead at the highest levels. Some examples are; setting up of Aarey milk colony in late 1949, collection of milk through ice chamber in milk cans, setting up taluka level milk union rather than district level milk unions, collective milk collection at village level rather than regular individual testing of milk, and establishment of government dairy in every district of Maharashtra. However, even though such steps did not succeed but the departmental officials kept on insisting on following their own Maharashtra pattern. They would also oppose Operation Flood Programme on every platform within the country. Despite these problems, Dr. Kurien always wanted to help

milk producers in Maharashtra. He was a great champion of poor milk producers all over India irrespective of state they may belong.

Luckily, every time there were hurdles from dairy department officials, there were always farmers' leaders who understood the sincere efforts made by Dr. Kurien and the advantages of 'Anand Pattern' for milk producers. Leaders such as Shri. Aannasaheb Shinde – State Minister for Agri. Govt. of India, Shri. Vasantdada Patil, Shri. Vasant Naik and many more supported NDDDB programme. Luckily, during OF programme, Shri. Vasantdada Patil and Shri. Vasant Naik stood firmly behind NDDDB, and thus it became possible to set up Jalgaon Milk Union and Kolhapur Milk union. However, during Operation Flood-III programme, no such senior leaders were there to support NDDDB.

Shri. Sudhakar Naik, nephew of Shri. Vasant Naik was the Chief Minister, Maharashtra during 1991-93. He was a staunch supporter of Dr. Kurien. The chief Minister called Dr. Madhavan, the Regional Director, NDDDB Mumbai and asked him what the Govt. of Maharashtra needs to do to get NDDDB funds. We briefed him about the necessity of signing an agreement with NDDDB which was stalled due to the opposition of the dairy development department officials.

The Chief Minister called Shri. Asit Kumar Tripathy, Secretary, ADF and asked him to give him a date by which, an agreement would be ready for signing. NDDDB officers sat with Secretary, ADF and his colleagues and finalized the draft of Operation Flood-III agreement by conducting several meetings and thrashed each and every point coming in the way of signing of the agreement. Once the agreement was ready for signing, we approached Chief Minister Shri. Sudhakar Naik. He said he would sign the agreement only in the presence of Dr. Kurien. He immediately contacted Dr. Kurien on the telephone in front of us and talked with him. It so happened that on the date proposed for signing the agreement, Dr. Kurien was scheduled to be in a meeting in Lucknow. The chief Minister insisted that Dr. Kurien must come for the agreement signing ceremony. This meeting in Lucknow was also preplanned and could not be cancelled. Therefore, the Chief Minister asked Dr. Kurien at what time he could fly from Lucknow to Mumbai on that day. Dr. Kurien said that he could fly from Lucknow to Mumbai on that day by a direct flight and would be able to reach by 8.30 p.m. in the evening. The Chief Minister said it was OK. He organized a special helicopter from airport to Rajbhavan at Malabar hill. This facility was given to Chief Minister and Governor. This is how that day Dr. Kurien came to Mumbai at 8.30 p.m. in the evening directly from Lucknow. He reached Rajbhavan at Malabar hill and came to Varsha Bunglow where Chief Minister's car was waiting for him. It was a grand ceremony, Dr. Ms. Amrita Patel, Managing Director of NDDDB, and Shri. Asit Kumar Tripathy, Secretary ADF, Govt. of Maharashtra both signed the agreement in the presence of Chief Minister, Maharashtra and Dr. Kurien. The state where Dr. Kurien was vehemently opposed gave him the honor of being special guest of the Chief Minister, and that is how the OF III agreement was signed.

I remember, the next day Dr. Madhavan carried the original copy of the agreement signed between Govt. of Maharashtra and NDDDB officials to Shri. Siddhivinayak temple, Dadar, Mumbai. He kept the agreement before Lord Ganapati idol and prayed for smooth implementation of OF programme.



This incident is yet another example of commitment and perseverance of NDDB's officials which enabled agreement with senior officials and political leadership in the Government of Maharashtra despite many hurdles.

Lokmanya Tilak Award (2002) for Dr. V. Kurien

I was state director for NDDB, Maharashtra during 2000-2003. In the year 2002, we received a message that Dr. Kurien would come to Pune to accept "Lokmanya Tilak Award" constituted by Lokmanya Tilak Trust, at Tilak Smarak Bhavan, Pune. The entire NDDB staff of 10 officers was asked to attend the ceremony. The Tilak Smarak Bhavan in Pune is very famous for its cultural activities. It is located in the middle of the Pune city near S.P. College. We had informed milk unions in Maharashtra about award ceremony well in advance. Therefore, huge number of farmers' leaders gathered that day. The hall was jam packed and people were standing in the corridor to have glimpse of Dr. Kurien and listen to his speech. Pune is considered as educational hub, not only in Maharashtra but also in western part of the country. The people in the city who are known to speak one of the purest cultured Marathi language were about to listen to a great orator of his time who never spoke any language other than English. His command over English was supreme.

On that day, in the month of August, Dr. Kurien was at his best in his usual style. In the beginning, he narrated about how the Amul dairy and NDDB were evolved at a small place called Anand in Gujarat. In the audience, there were government departments' officers who had opposed Dr. Kurien's policy "tooth and nail". At one point of time in Pune, Dr. Kurien's effigy was burnt by the government dairy employees protesting against implementation of Operation Flood Programme. In the same city, where Dr. Kurien and his policies were opposed, he was being felicitated by one of the prestigious award that too none other than grandson of Lokmanya Tilak. Lokmanya Tilak was known for his outspoken and forthright nationalism. Dr. Kurien exhibited similar qualities. Probably he was one of the fittest awardees for Lokmanya Tilak Award which was constituted by the Lokmanya Tilak Trust since 1983.

I still remember his speech and his philosophical remark. He said, in this world, nothing is clear cut black or white. There is always a shade of gray in between. Throughout this life, Dr. Kurien favoured doing things in White. That is why he named Operation Flood as "White Revolution".

Despite this 'Illustrated Weekly' accused NDDB for white lies. He fought these black forces throughout his life and never compromised his values. His hatred for bureaucracy emanated from his experiences with different governments.

Probably that is why on that day he said nothing is either white or black in this world and there is shade of gray in between. What a classic remark. It was a memorable day for dairy industry in Maharashtra.

Dhara Oil, Mumbai and Shivasena

Shri. Sharad Pawar was Chief Minister of Maharashtra during period 1993-95. That was the period when incident of bomb blast had just happened in Mumbai. At that time, Shiv Sena was trying to come to power through different agitations. One such agitation Shiv Sena carried on was, supply of vegetable oil through ration shops. Dhara Oil was being marketed by Gujarat Co-Operative Milk Marketing Federation (GCMMF). Their Mumbai sales activities were being looked after by Shri Vivek Mathai, who used to sit in Amul's office at V.T.. Maharashtra Government had written to NDDB/ GCMMF and requested for supply of Dhara Oil to Govt. of Maharashtra through Govt. ration shops. Further, Govt. of Maharashtra wanted Dhara Oil for ration shops at less than wholesale price with delivery at each ration shop by GCMMF. But, GCMMF was ready to supply at wholesale price at only one point in Mumbai and not to each and every ration shop.

This was the period when Shiv Sena used to hijack oil godowns of private companies and would break them open, and distribute the oil at MRP and deposit the money with godown keeper. This agitation was to show that the private oil companies were hoarding oil and making profit. They also targeted the Amul Federation's office at V.T. The activists of Shiv Sena along with media and photographers entered the room of Manager, and Shiv Sena leaders put black colour on the face of the Manager. The Photographs were taken and next day it was front page news in the local media.

On this backdrop, Dr. Kurien who was also the Chairman of Amul Federation, was to visit Mumbai and meet Shri. Sharad Pawar – Chief Minister at Mantralaya. The officers in NDDB and at Mantralaya were worried whether the meeting should be held in such situation. The agenda and the date of the meeting were already decided and it could not be cancelled. Dr. Kurien was fearless and never worried about what would happen. However, responsibility naturally came upon NDDB Mumbai office to see that the meeting with Chief Minister went on smoothly. During those days, I along with my colleagues visited Mantralaya several times to discuss about agenda and timing of the meeting and what care need to be taken for smooth running of the meeting.

There are four gates leading to Mantralaya – entrance and exit. Generally, two gates are restricted for VVIPs. Other two gates, one is called Garden gate and other is called Aarsa gate. General public come inside through these two gates on the basis of gate pass and I.D. Today also, same procedure is followed except one has to stand in queue and give thumb impression and the contractor's man takes your photograph.

On that day, we divided ourselves into two teams and stood in front of these two gates mentioned above. The idea was that if Shiv Sena got the information of Dr. Kurien's arrival then they may try to create some hurdles. Dr. Kurien was known to be very particular about entering the meeting hall at specified time. He never liked to go and wait in the meeting room. He was accompanied by Dr. Madhavan. We were standing at the entrance of the main gate.

The traffic in Mumbai is very unpredictable. Therefore, Dr. Madhavan had started from Goregaon office a bit early and reached Church-gate few minutes before the time. The meeting time was yet to come, and his vehicle circled around Mantralaya. At exactly five



minutes before the meeting time, Dr. Kurien arrived at the gate. Rather than entering from main gate, we brought his vehicle from the side garden gate inside the Mantralaya annex. The liftman was already requested to block the lift only for VVIP visitors so that there was no delay in waiting for lift. Dr. Kurien was taken to the 6th floor for the meeting. I was along with him and we were walking towards Chief Minister's office on 6th floor. We NDDB officers were a bit in tense. However, Dr. Kurien was not aware about our tension. He was in his usual combating mood. He looked around the corridor of Mantralaya and could see some almirahs stuck with old files. It was a typical government office look all around. He asked me, "Ghanekar, what these files are doing here? Why don't you just burn them? They are of no use". I could not answer his question, but gave a smile. By that time, we had reached C.M.'s office. He entered into C.M.'s office and then we could relax for some time. I do not know how much the meeting was fruitful. But we were happy to see that the meeting went on peacefully without any incidence from Shiv Sena side. After meeting, Dr. Kurien returned to Anand, Gujarat safely.

Now, when I look back, I remember the remarks of Dr. Kurien about burning of Mantralaya's files, I realize how his prediction has actually become true. After several years, Shri. Prithviraj Chavan was the Chief Minister of Maharashtra. During the period 2010 – 2014, these files caught fire on 6th floor, and Mantralaya was burning for several hours. Later on the premises were cleaned and matter was never investigated. Dr. Kurien had uttered those words out of disgust that day. Those files had no value, and they really deserved to be burnt. They were lying there without any purpose. I now realize why he said that.

NDDB succeeded in implementation of OF programme only because NDDB never behaved like Govt. body, never relied on files and the minutes of meeting; but relied more on real time working and results. That was the message Dr. Kurien always wanted to give to the bureaucrats working in various government offices. That day also he was probably seeing the futility of those files lying there in the corridors of power.

Dr. Kurien visits Kolhapur Milk Union

NDDB team was deployed in the Kolhapur Milk shed during the period from 1978-1983. Kolhapur district was chosen as one of the 18's Anand pattern Unions to be created all over the country. The milk sheds were chosen purely based on their merits of producing buffalo milk in the milk shed. In the state of Maharashtra, only two milk sheds were chosen, one was Jalgaon and other was Kolhapur.

During the period 1977-78, Shri. Vasantdada Patil was the Chief Minister of Maharashtra. He wanted Sangli district to be included under Operation Flood Programme. But, because of plenty of buffalo milk in Kolhapur district, NDDB preferred inclusion of Kolhapur milk shed under OF programme. NDDB team leader Shri. V.G. Patil and myself were deployed to Kolhapur for milk project in 1978 and later on other team members joined the project.

In the year 1980, Dr. V. Kurien's daughter Ms. Nirmala Kurien married and we got the information that Dr. Kurien was travelling by road along with his daughter and son-in-law on the way to Otty, Tamilnadu. We decided to take this opportunity and on behalf

of Kolhapur Milk union, requested Dr. Kurien to take halt at Kolhapur. After few days, we got a message that Dr. Kurien had agreed for just few hours halt at Kolhapur on his way to Otti. Generally, Dr. Kurien never visited the place which is not connected by airport. He travelled a lot and visited several Indian capitals, and was always very busy. Therefore, it was not possible for him to waste his time on road travel. However, this was a rare opportunity for us, that he was on private tour and was travelling by road along with his family. We were trying for his visit to Kolhapur since long because we thought that his visit would be of great inspiration for the farmers' leaders and NDDB team working in Kolhapur project. Each time we were told that Kolhapur being in one corner of the state and not well connected with the airport, it was not possible to organize visit of Dr. Kurien. Therefore, this visit was something like "wind fall" opportunity for us to motivate local leaders and officers working in the project.

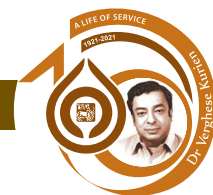
At that time, the Kolhapur milk project was in its nascent stage. There was a small 50,000 lit. per day capacity Govt. dairy at Kolhapur and union office was located in a rented small building near hotel Opal. Shri. Anandrao Patil (Chuyekar) the founder chairman of Kolhapur Milk Union was a very simple person. He was not able to communicate with Dr. Kurien in English or Hindi. Therefore, that day the responsibility of translating what Shri. Anandrao Patil Chuyekar was saying, was entrusted to me. It was a challenging task.

No sooner the family of Dr. Kurien had arrived, they were taken to the Opal hotel, where they became fresh and took lunch. Meanwhile, Dr. Kurien visited our office which was just nearby the hotel. Shri. Anandrao Patil Chuyekar narrated him about the milk collection which was around 60,000 lit per day and how he was implementing the project and what sort of difficulties he was facing. Dr. Kurien told Shri. Anandrao Patil that the essence of Anand Pattern and development of Amul was its self-reliance. He told that, if he relied on government dairy for processing of milk, they would never let co-operatives become strong. The only way to become strong was farmers' co-operative which should manage control and operate their own dairy. He told Shri. Anandrao Patil to purchase piece of land near Kolhapur, and NDDB would help in constructing a new dairy. He also said to Shri. Anandrao Patil that Kolhapur district is a potential area to procure process and market few lakh litres of milk. What was important was that the Kolhapur Union should control assets and do marketing activities themselves. Shri. Anandrao Patil was happy with the visit of Dr. Kurien.

This visit was a turning point in the history of Kolhapur Milk Union. The milk union followed the ideas of Dr. Kurien word by word and never looked back. Dr. Kurien used to quote example of Kolhapur Milk Union to others. He knew with his experience that the Kolhapur Milk Union would become one of the 18's Anand which he had dreamt of.

Transfer of NDDB's Officer

Under Operation Flood-II programme, NDDB decided to expand from 18's Anand to 136 milk shades in the country. In order to expand the reach of NDDB's programme it was decided to send NDDB's officers on secondment instead of entire spear head team (SHT) consisting of 7 to 8 employees from NDDB. Only one or two officers would be seconded



to respective milk union in each state. Total 25 milk sheds were identified for covering under OF II programme in Maharashtra.

I was asked to shift from Kolhapur to Solapur project in the year 1983 for about two years. My first project was Jalgaon (1974) where there were senior officers such as Dr. M. L. Naware (now working as a consultant), Shri. N. B. Vashi (Still working as Managing Director in Vasudhara Dairy, Valsad), Shri. V.G. Patil (Working at Vasudhara Dairy, Dhule as Incharge).

The Kolhapur Milk shed was rich in milk potential whereas, the Solapur milk shed where I was seconded in 1983, had a different story altogether. The area was drought prone and history of drought stretched back to 100 years. Therefore, development of dairying under Anand pattern was a real challenging task. Initially, I was the only person who was posted in Solapur and later on Shri. B. R. Karad, Shri. Rajiv Deshmukh and Shri. K. C. Supekar joined the project for some time. Later they were transferred whereas; I remained with the project till 1987. My secondment was for two years till 1985. By that time, we had started the union from almost zero milk collection to about 50,000 lit. per day. We had employed local staff and there was nominated board headed by Shri. Bhagawanrao Chavan, who was very “down to the earth” person. He was non-political and had history of being workers’ leader in Solapur Municipal Corporation. He was close to Shri. Sushilkumar Shinde and Shri. Sharad Pawar the political leader from Maharashtra

In the year 1985, NDDB indicated to Solapur milk union that it was time that Shri. D.V. Ghanekar will be withdrawn. In the opinion of Shri. Bhagawanrao Chavan, we had just started the journey of making the union viable under the guidance of NDDB, and therefore, he wanted me to continue as Managing Director of Solapur Milk Union. In fact, though I was on secondment I was already working as Managing Director of the union. NDDB indicated that they will not be able to spare Shri. D. V. Ghanekar, and therefore, he will be transferred soon. Shri. Bhagawanrao Chavan wrote a letter to Dr. Kurien, Chairman, NDDB directly explaining why he would like Shri. D. V. Ghanekar to continue as a Managing Director of Solapur Milk shed and would like to meet Dr. Kurien personally for this reason.

I was pretty sure that my career was in danger. Dr. Kurien was known to be averse to the idea of NDDB’s officer working as Managing Director in a union and at the same time would take NDDB’s salary. There were instances in the past, when in some milk shed such as Salem and Bhatinda, farmers had agitated for continuing NDDB’s officers and not to transfer them. Dr. Kurien was very particular about transferring such officers. In such situation, probably, Dr. Kurien always thought that officers were manipulating their relationship with local leaders in order to avoid transfer from project. Not only I was sure that I will be transferred from Solapur, but I was expecting good banging either from my immediate boss or Dr. Kurien himself.

A meeting was set in a small restaurant near Amul’s office at V.T., Mumbai. Shri. A. K. Banerjee, Resident Director, Shri. Bhagawanrao Chavan, myself and Dr. Kurien were sitting around a small table in the restaurant. Shri. Bhagawanrao Chavan explained Dr. Kurien how Solapur Milk Union was struggling to succeed under very difficult circumstances in

Solapur district. He further explained that the area had tremendous potential but, that needs guidance and funds from NDDB for some more time. The two years secondment period for any project to develop was very short and therefore, he was asking extension of Shri. D. V. Ghanekar. Shri. Bhagawanrao Chavan was a workers' leaders in Solapur Municipal Corporation, therefore, he was fearless, and put forward his views very frankly to Dr. Kurien. Shri. Bhagawanrao Chavan was very simple and non corrupt person. He had imbibed NDDB's philosophy thoroughly, and used to fight for NDDB's cause at different forums in Mumbai and even in Delhi. He was one of the active Chairman among Milk Unions and considered as asset of OF programme. Dr. Kurien used to like him. After listening him for some time, Dr. Kurien told him that if he liked working of Ghanekar so much, then why didn't you take his services permanently? He would ask Ghanekar to resign from NDDB and join Solapur Milk Union. This was a crucial moment. Shri. Bhagawanrao Chavan though only 7th Std. pass, had a great timing and presence of mind. He quickly responded to Dr. Kurien saying that, Dr. Kurien knew working in co-operative was not very easy. He would be in Solapur Milk Shed as nominated chairman for few more years. Later, after elections, somebody else will take over as Chairman. Shri. D. V. Ghanekar was honest and hard working person. He said he did not know whether new chairman would like to continue Shri. D. V. Ghanekar as Managing Director, and therefore, he would not like to spoil the career of Shri. D. V. Ghanekar. He was only asking Shri. Ghanekar to be with him as Managing Director, till he was chairman of the nominated board. Shri. Bhagawanrao Chavan's clarity of the issue and frankness appealed to Dr. Kurien. He appreciated what chairman Solapur Milk Union said. Dr. Kurien turned towards Shri. A. K. Banerjee and told him that, Shri. Ghanekar should continue as Managing Director of Solapur Milk Union as per request of Shri. Bhagawanrao Chavan. As Dr. Kurien had some important work he left restaurant immediately. This was a memorable meeting for me. There are so many lessons to be learnt from interactions between Shri. Bhagawanrao Chavan and Dr. Kurien.

Looking back to this event, after several years, I feel, had there been any other person other than Shri. Bhagawanrao Chavan of same calibre or influence, Dr. Kurien would not have agreed to his demand. Dr. Kurien was a great admirer of local farmer's leadership. He was very quick to understand and get connected with local farmer leaders and he was very sensitive and passionate about their feelings for the project. He wanted milk union to make the project successful. Helping the project and milk producers was always top priority for him. He probably immediately understood that this was the case where neither Ghanekar nor Shri. Bhagawanrao Chavan had come to meet him with any personal agenda. They were just soldiers fighting to make milk producers happy, and it was his duty to help them with ammunition of moral and funding support from NDDB. Probably that was the reason why Dr. Kurien agreed to the demand of Shri. Bhagawanrao Chavan which otherwise, he would have turned down.

Meeting of Shri. Narayan Rane with Dr. Kurien

Shri. Manohar Joshi was Chief Minister of Maharashtra during 1995-99. Shri. Narayan Rane was holding portfolio of Revenue and Dairying in his ministry. I was working as State



coordinator of Maharashtra at NDDDB, Mumbai office, and therefore, I had to meet Shri. Narayan Rane frequently. Shri. Narayan Rane belongs to Konkan region of Maharashtra. We used to visit Shri. Narayan Rane's office and would always request him to visit NDDDB, Anand. The idea was to show him the working of Amul dairy and activities of NDDDB plus a meeting with Dr. Kurien. This type of approach always helped in furthering the cause of Operation Flood Programme in the state of Maharashtra.

As usual at the ministerial level, it was difficult to get dates and that too suitable to NDDDB, Anand. However, we could organize a meeting at NDDDB, Anand. That day, I had an opportunity to travel with Shri. Narayan Rane from Mumbai to Vadodara, and then on the way to NDDDB, Anand. On the way, I briefed Shri. Narayan Rane about the working of NDDDB's Operation Flood programme etc. Shri. Narayan Rane is well educated person, and therefore, was able to understand the Nitty-gritty of the project activities quickly.

At Anand, as usual, we took him to nearby village co-operative society. He was impressed by the Anand Pattern dairy co-operative at village level. Later, we showed him Amul Dairy and in the afternoon, he met Dr. Kurien. After initial discussion, about implementation of OF programme in Maharashtra and various issues vis-à-vis dairy department, to my surprise, he raised issue of inclusion of Konkan area under OF programme. Other NDDDB officers were also surprised. Konkan is not known for milk production. Therefore, as per NDDDB's reports, the area was not covered under OF programme for milk production but, it was covered for milk marketing purpose. We were just keeping silent and we were wondering what Dr. Kurien would reply. It seemed Dr. Kurien was used to such demands. We told Shri. Narayan Rane that, Anand Pattern is based on assumptions that there is some milk production already taking place, and idea was to provide infrastructure and bring market near to our producers by linking market with production. In case of Konkan, the farmers in that area either do not have buffalos and cows, and even if they have, the production is very little; therefore the project in Konkan would not be viable. Therefore, he suggested that, instead of giving proposal for developing dairying in Konkan, he should find out other agricultural activities suitable for farmers in Konkan area such as cashew, mango etc. If farmers are ready to organize Mango Co-operatives for selling Alfonso mango, NDDDB would help them in that project. Shri Narayan Rane still was not convinced and continued to insist for inclusion of the project under OF programme. Later, NDDDB included Konkan region only for marketing purpose. This incident clearly shows that how farmers' leaders in Maharashtra were looking towards NDDDB and its projects. Unfortunately, the essence of NDDDB's pattern was not understood by all properly. NDDDB's funds were available only for specific purpose, and were not available the way Govt. allocates funds purely based on local political considerations. In this case Dr. Kurien very diplomatically said no to Shri. Narayan Rane's proposal.

While coming out of the meeting, the personal assistant of dairy minister asked me whether NDDDB would give gift of Amul cheese and chocolates. I enquired with Shri. S.D. Burde, who was looking after P.R. activities. Shri Burde told me that neither NDDDB nor Amul give any gift to the guests. If they were interested to have them, there was shop outside Amul dairy where one could go and purchase. I had hard time in telling to P.A.

that neither NDDB nor Amul had provision of giving gift to the guests. The Govt. officers accompanying the ministers were surprised as they would never get such treatment elsewhere.

Powder Plant of Bikaner dairy to Kolhapur Milk Union

Kolhapur District Co-operative Milk Union (Gokul) started its new dairy at MIDC, Gokul Shirgaon, Kolhapur in the year 1985. NDDB had taken this project on turn-key basis and erected dairy of 2 lakh lit. per day capacity for handling milk and 10 MT per day capacity of powder plant. As soon as new dairy was constructed, Gokul started collecting more milk from Kolhapur district. Gokul started direct milk sale in Mumbai in the year 1988. In order to comply with the excess milk in flush season there was a need for establishing higher capacity of powder plant.

Meanwhile, NDDB approached Gokul dairy with a proposal that, there was a new brand powder plant lying idle at Bikaner dairy, Rajasthan. Bikaner dairy had developed “cold feet” because of low procurement. Therefore, they suddenly requested NDDB to take back powder plant which was imported from The Netherlands. I was that time working as State Coordinator in NDDB, Mumbai and was also on the Board of Kolhapur Milk Union on behalf of NDDB. I raised the matter for purchasing this powder plant for Kolhapur Milk Union in their Board of Directors meeting and requested them to decide the matter.

The Board of Directors of Kolhapur Milk Union discussed the matter with their technical staff, and it was decided that the Board of Directors would visit Bikaner Dairy and verify themselves whether the powder plant was new and in good condition. They also wanted to know from technical officers whether the plant was suitable for Kolhapur Milk Union, and also whether it will be the wise decision. That time, the cost of powder plant was Rs. 7 crores which included 70% loan and 30% subsidy. The board members subsequently, visited Bikaner dairy and were satisfied with the status of the powder plant which was new brand and was lying idle. Even boxes were not opened.

Accordingly, the Kolhapur Milk Union wrote a letter to NDDB giving consent to the proposal of NDDB, however, they did not agree with the price. The Board was expecting that, in their opinion, “It was a secondhand plant because Bikaner dairy was not ready to use it, and therefore, the cost of transport from Bikaner Dairy to Kolhapur Milk Union should be borne by NDDB”. Another issue was regarding levying interest from the date when the plant arrived in India from The Netherlands. The Kolhapur Milk Union wanted the rate of interest to be levied only after erection at Kolhapur Union, and earlier interest till arrival at Kolhapur should be borne by NDDB. Further, there were some apprehensions about certain parts could be missing. Therefore, Kolhapur Milk Union insisted that the plant should be erected and if there were any parts missing, then expenses should not be charged to Kolhapur Milk Union, and NDDB should bear those expenses.

Normally, that was an era when union like Kolhapur Milk Union could not have thought of putting conditions to NDDB. The letter went to NDDB and was marked to engineering and accounts department and there was discussion among senior officers and as was expected, NDDB wrote back to Kolhapur Milk Union saying that NDDB did not agree



with the conditions. The Kolhapur Milk Union would have to accept “as is where is basis”, and any interest, transportation and expenses of missing parts would have to be borne by the Union. The Board of Directors were also apprehensive whether powder plant technology was sound enough and therefore, they consulted Shri. Pandita from “L & T”. There was a meeting at NDDB, Mumbai office which was attended by senior officers from NDDB, Shri. Pandita from L & T, board of directors of Kolhapur Milk Union and their technical staff. Shri. Pandita told at the end of the meeting to Board of Directors of Kolhapur Milk Union that the technology used for powder plant was latest and was best in the world, and they were getting 30% subsidy. Further, the price of powder plant was on old purchase order and present cost of the powder plant was almost double. Therefore, Kolhapur Milk Union should accept the proposal of NDDB, he suggested.

The board of directors of Kolhapur Milk Union were satisfied with technical information, however, on the economic front, they were still insisting that, NDDB should give them some relief. Therefore, Chairman, Kolhapur Milk Union, wrote a letter to NDDB for a meeting on this issue. The meeting was organized in Anand, which was attended by Senior Officers from NDDB, Board of Directors of Kolhapur Milk Union, and Dr. Kurien himself.

In the meeting, Shri. Arun Narke, Chairman, Kolhapur Milk Union, put forward that NDDB should not charge unnecessary interest and transport cost and for missing parts if any. The attitude of both the parties in the meeting was positive. Dr. Kurien had to resolve the issue with some win win formula. He decided that NDDB would not charge transportation and missing parts replacement charges whereas the Kolhapur Milk Union will have to bear interest part. There was no provision with NDDB for booking interest part which was always paid by the project. Both the parties were happy that they have gained something, and the matter was resolved.

This story clearly reveals the untiring efforts by the Board of Directors of Kolhapur Milk Union to get justice. They found out whether the proposal was technically and financially suitable for the union. They went for consultation of 3rd party and did not readily believe their own officers and NDDB officers. On the other side, Dr. Kurien’s role was crucial because NDDB was in the tight spot. The Bikaner Milk Union was not in a position to use powder plant and Kolhapur Milk Union was a right choice. Therefore, he agreed to some of the conditions of Kolhapur Milk Union, and resolved the issue. He had power to take decision and he rightly did so.

I am not God – said Dr. Kurien

The Jalgaon Milk Union, Jalgaon was covered under Operation Flood Programme in the year 1974. The Union was among first ‘18 Anand’s project under OF programme. The Jalgaon Milk Union was chosen purely based on buffalo milk production in that area. Since ages, “Khandeshi Ghee” was famous in that part of northern Maharashtra. Shri. Madhukarrao Choudhari who was veteran congress leader in that area had made special efforts and talked to Chief Minister Shri. Vasantrao Naik for inclusion of Jalgaon project under OF programme. Luckily, there was no government dairy established in Jalgaon which made it easier to bring Jalgaon Milk Union under OF programme. The

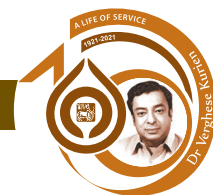
government dairy department officers were always opposing NDDB's programme. In one of the meetings, Shri. Padmanabhayaa – the then commissioner of dairying had angrily exchanged words with Dr. Kurien. Shri. Padmanabhayya, a Senior IAS officer, argued with Dr. Kurien that why NDDB was asking marketing support to Jalgaon Milk Project, when he always talked about self-reliance. Dr. Kurien retorted in the meeting and told him that, if he could hand over one Mumbai dairy out of three to NDDB project, he would make Jalgaon Milk Union viable within no time. However, the government never handed over its dairies to NDDB.

The Jalgaon Milk Union started with great enthusiasm with deployment of NDDB's team leaders such as Dr. M.L. Naware, Shri. N.B. Vashi, Shri. V.G. Patil. I was also one of the team members. After withdrawal of NDDB's team in 1976, there were series of NDDB sponsored high ranking, stalwart, officers such as Shri. R. D. Patel, Shri. A.K. Datta, Dr. M. L. Naware, Shri. B. K. Garg, Shri. D. Relan, Dr. Abraham Joseph etc. There were some government officers who took over as Managing Director. Despite NDDB's support and supply of funds and manpower, the board of directors could not run Jalgaon Milk Union as was expected from them. As a state coordinator of NDDB, I continued to be on the board of Jalgaon Milk Union. During the chairmanship of Dr. Madhavrao Bhauji Patil, the union's position was so bad that the union was slowly going to the stage of liquidation. The situation was so serious that, the staff did not get salary, and they were sitting on hunger strike in front of District Collector's office. The Jalgaon Milk Union which was collecting earlier about 4 lakh liters milk per day was now collecting only 8,000 lit. of milk per day. The union was about to be closed.

The then Chairman of Jalgaon Milk Union requested me to arrange meeting with Dr. Kurien in Anand. I sent a request to Dr. Kurien's office and he agreed for meeting. The Board of Directors of Jalgaon Milk Union and myself went to Anand. No sooner Dr. Kurien entered the room, the Chairman, Jalgaon Milk Union started touching feet of Dr. Kurien, and said that for him Dr. Kurien was like a God, and he had come to Anand to request NDDB to rescue Jalgaon Milk Union. As usual, I was translating what Chairman Jalgaon Milk Union was saying to Dr. Kurien. Dr. Kurien was in his usual mood. He turned towards me and asked me to translate what he was going to say in Marathi to the board of directors, which was rather difficult. I still remember Dr. Kurien was saying "Tell him, I am not God, My feet are also made up of clay". Somehow, I conveyed to him the meaning of what Dr. Kurien was saying.

The meeting went on for a long time, but at the end, it was decided that NDDB would give only one senior officer who would make efforts to turn around the Jalgaon Union. NDDB would not give any subsidy to Jalgaon Milk Union. The board of directors of Jalgaon Milk Union would not interfere with the working of Managing Director deployed by NDDB. The board of directors of Jalgaon Milk Union agreed all the conditions of NDDB.

Thereafter, Dr. Abraham Joseph was deployed as Managing Director of Jalgaon Milk Union, and later Shri. B. K. Garg, Shri. D. Relan were posted as Managing Director. Within a span of four years, all the losses of about Rs. 30 crores were wiped out, and the Jalgaon Milk Union became viable. It started procuring two Lakh litres of milk per day and the employees were getting salary regularly.



That day, in the meeting what Dr. Kurien said was quite true. No sooner the NDDB took over management of Jalgaon Milk Union, the employees started creating troubles. But it was handled with iron hand, and the organization was saved.

Dr. Kurien used to read peoples' mind, at the same time, he had heart of lion, and therefore, he continued to support Jalgaon Milk Union despite there were so many odds and hurdles. Ultimately, he proved his point.

Today, Jalgaon Milk Union has once again become viable and is doing well. If you manage the organization with passion for farmers and if your heart and soul is in running the organization, then nothing would happen wrong, and the organization would always succeed. That was the "management 'Dr. Kurien's style".

We will not give funds to Missionaries – said Dr. Kurien

I was posted at NDDB, Anand during 1997 to 2000. At Anand, I was working under Dr. N. V. Belavadi in Co-operative Services Group. This group dealt with activities of erstwhile farmers' organization (FO) group. The activities mainly pertained to training for village level empowerment of milk producers, management committee members, village dairy co-operative employees and especially organization of women milk producers for their empowerment. Apart from these main activities, our job was also to look after guest house, hostel, receiving NDDB's guests, library, up keeping training facilities etc.

Whenever there was any senior level guest visiting Anand, we used to receive, accompany, show around, and brief the guests about Amul, NDDB, OF programme etc. One of the crucial parts of the guests programme was to "debrief Dr. Kurien" about who was the guest, why the guest was visiting Anand, and most importantly, which questions the guest was likely to ask Dr. Kurien, when the guest was to meet him in person. This was the most difficult task because how one would know which type of questions the guest would ask Dr. Kurien.

On this particular occasion, one "Missionary" from Chattisgarh was visiting Anand. I was asked to accompany him. As usual, I took him to nearby Anand Pattern village, then to Amul dairy, and briefed him as usual about OF programme, Amul dairy, and NDDB. He seemed to be very much impressed. He was particularly asking several questions about training to milk producers, and how milk union could become viable in commercial activities. By now, I knew that, when he meets Dr. Kurien, he would ask funds for training of milk producers and organization of milk union in Chhatisgarh. Incidentally, he was running NGO which probably would have worked as implementing agency.

In the afternoon, before he met Dr. Kurien, I had already one sitting with Dr. Kurien wherein, I debriefed about what missionary was likely to ask him. After listening to me, he said you should also sit in the meeting along with him and further cautioned me that we were not going to give any fund to the Missionary.

The Missionary came at scheduled time. For some time they both talked about other topics and in the end, he asked for assistance from NDDB. Dr. Kurien quickly realized what missionary had to say. In the end, Dr. Kurien only briefly mentioned that, NDDB had

mandate to help only co-operatives, and therefore, funds could not be made available for his NGO; and at the most, NDDDB could train some of his trainers, and that was the end of the meeting.

Dr. Kurien was true Indian. He was first Indian, and afterwards, he was either Keralite or Christian, and he himself used to say that he was Gujarati. Those, who still accuse him of being partisan towards Christian, must understand that Dr. Kurien did not have double standards. He refused to grant funds to the Missionary organization and I was witness to that.

Dr. Kurien receives ‘Sir Vishveshwaraia Memorial Award’ in 1998 at Kolhapur

The Dairy project of Kolhapur Zilla Sahakari Dudh Utpadak Sangh Ltd. (Gokul) was expanded in 1997. The dairy was not inaugurated because Gokul was planning to invite some top level dignitaries like Smt. Indira Gandhi. However, due to various reasons, the plant could not be inaugurated.

Meanwhile, Shri. Arun Narke, the then Chairman of Gokul, came to know that Sir Vishveshwaraia Memorial Award has been declared and will be given to Dr. Kurien with a grand ceremony in Kolhapur. Shri. Arun Narke knew Dr. Kurien since beginning of Operation Flood-I programme implementation in Kolhapur district. He considered Dr. Kurien as his ‘Guru’ and was always in his contact. Shri. Arun Narke was also associated with Indian Dairy Association. He immediately tried to contact Dr. Kurien. Each time, he contacted Shri. Joseph who was P.A. of Dr. Kurien, but Shri. Joseph found some reason not to allow Shri. Arun Narke to contact or speak Dr. Kurien. Shri. Narke got irritated and angrily told Shri. Joseph that, he was representing five lakh dairy farmers, and he urgently wanted to speak with Dr. Kurien. Shri. Arun Narke knew that Dr. Kurien was in the habit of prioritizing his appointment. He would always prefer meeting or listening to milk producers rather than top level dignitaries. This strategy was successful and Shri. Joseph immediately connected him to Dr. Kurien.

During telephonic conversation, Shri. Arun Narke requested Dr. Kurien to come to Gokul dairy during his visit to Kolhapur to receive Sir Vishveshwaraia Memorial Award. There was hardly a gap of 20 minutes before he had to go back from Kolhapur. But at the same time Dr. Kurien could not say ‘no’ to Shri. Arun Narke.

Dr. Kurien told him that he would give only 20 minutes and he would take tea at Gokul Dairy. Dr. Kurien once again told Shri. Arun Narke not to waste time on formalities during his visit. Shri. Arun Narke was very happy because of Dr. Kurien’s visit to Gokul dairy and it was a rare occasion.

On that day, he arrived at Kolhapur airport in the morning. The award ceremony was in Shahu Smarak Bhavan in the middle of the city. The programme went on for one and half hour. In the beginning of his lecture, Dr. Kurien referred to Shri. Arun Narke as his friend, and also informed the organizers that he would take tea at Gokul dairy.



On the way to Gokul dairy after the programme, Shri. Arun Narke briefed Dr. Kurien about Gokul project and achievements so far. The moment Dr. Kurien entered in the Gokul premises he was impressed by the cleanliness and beauty of the campus. He was also impressed by the way Shri. Arun Narke had organized 15 minute's inaugural function of the dairy. Even for such a short programme, there were farmers of surrounding areas, board of directors, women members who were present. He took tea along with board of directors and he praised for organizing such a short but sweet inaugural programme.

Dr. Kurien inspired millions of farmers during his life time. If we look at the budget of OF I, II, III, it is nowhere near to the budget of NDP. However, with such a small budget, Dr. Kurien could achieve many milestones for dairy industry and that was only possible because he could inspire people to do something extraordinary which otherwise they would not have done in their life time.

At the airport Mrs. Kurien and Dr. Kurien climbed the staircase of aeroplane, and Dr. Kurien just turned back and looked at Shri. Arun Narke and waved his hand. Shri. Arun Narke's eyes were full of tears as he could not believe that his 'Guru' had just now visited the dairy even if it was for only 20 minutes.

Visit of The Prime Minister Shri. Atal Bihari Vajpayee to Anand, Gujarat

On April 11, 2000, the then Prime Minister Shri. Atal Bihari Vajpayee visited Anand, Gujarat. Much before his visit, NDDB, Anand was making preparation for his visit. I was at that time working at NDDB, Anand in the Co-operative Services Group.

One day, Dr. N.V. Belavadi called me and told that, CS Group had to organize visit of Prime Minister Shri. Atal Bihari Vajpayee at nearby village. After long discussions, we zeroed on village Napad near Anand for visit of Prime Minister. We had deliberately picked up uncommon village Napad, because we wanted to give chance to other villages, where generally such visits are not organized. Napad village is Muslim and backward class community dominated area. It was also not easily approachable from main road. Therefore, selection of this village made it challenging to organize visit of dignitaries of Prime Minister's level. Myself and Shri Padhiar from our group visited several times to Napad for making preparation of the visit. We took meetings with Sarpanch of the village Napad, management committee members of DCS and village folks. After making primary preparations, we informed the police and various Govt. officials about selection of Napad village for visit of Prime Minister. Thereafter, several Govt. officials started visiting the village. The Public Works Dept. quickly undertook construction of tar road approaching the main road of the village. The villagers were happy about the visit of Prime Minister, because for a long time demand for construction of tar road from main road to their village was pending. M/s. Rajsthan Electronics and Instruments Ltd. (REIL) took responsibility of maintenance of electronic testing machines and weighing scales during the visit. The DCS took responsibility of white washing of building. NDDB provided funds.

The day before visit of Prime Minister, Police Officers took objection for some arrangements saying that milk producers will have to come four hours before actual visit starts and all the milk producers would have to go through metal detector. We discussed

with police officers and told them that the milk is a perishable commodity and we could not afford to wait for four hours. The police authority ultimately agreed for one hour waiting and that too only 20 women milk producers to come inside the DCS. Further, the police insisted that each and every milk vessel would be checked by inserting device into the milk. We told them that, that was likely to spoil milk if such procedure is adopted. After a long discussion, we decided that each milk producer will pour milk into another bucket in front of police officer, so that, they would be assured that there was nothing hidden inside the milk.

Then the police authorities raised another issue of cattle feed. They said the gunny bag containing cattle feed could not be kept inside the DCS during visit of Prime Minister. They suspected that something could be kept inside the gunny bag and that would be dangerous. Ultimately, it was decided that, we would keep only one gunny bag to demonstrate cattle feed sale and the same gunny bag would be checked by the police before the visit.

The DCS had a novel scheme of distribution of green fodder in the DCS premises. A tractor loaded with green fodder used to stand every day in front of DCS and the milk producers used to purchase it by giving coupon and carry it. The police even objected to the pile of green fodder. They told that something could be kept inside the fodder and that was not permitted. We insisted that it was one of the innovative activities of village society and therefore, the tractor loaded with green fodder would be kept in front of DCS. Even today very few DCS could have such practice all over the country. After a long discussion, the police found way to inspect green fodder before the visit. The police authorities amicably agreed to all the points raised by us and that was how the preparations for visit were finalized.

During that period, Dr. Miss Amrita Patel was Chairman of NDDB and Dr. V. Kurien was Chairman of IRMA and Amul federation. Dr. Kurien himself insisted that Miss. Amrita Patel, being chairman of NDDB, would welcome the Prime Minister at helipad; whereas being chairman of Amul federation he would represent on behalf of millions of farmers at Napad village and welcome the Prime Minister.

On the day of arrival of PM that day the entire NDDB complex was virtually taken over by Police. PM was staying in Guest house in NDDB campus. That area was cordoned off. Nobody was allowed to go that side except few such as cooks etc. From NDDB side only Miss Amrita Patel was allowed to go. We noticed that Shri. D. Tikku – Managing Director of NDDB was having heated argument with police. He wanted to go towards Guest House but police won't allow him. He told them he was MD of NDDB. He even showed them his ID. The police said they had instructions from Delhi that nobody except Miss Amrita Patel would be allowed to cross over towards Guest House. Shri. D. Tikku could not digest the fact that though he was MD of the Host organization, the police force was not recognizing him as VVIP. That's how the Govt. functions and more so particularly the police department!..

On the day of visit, we went early at Napad so that, we could oversee the preparation. To our surprise, we saw Dr. Kurien already sitting in the open space opposite village



DCS. Somebody had arranged chair for him and he was sitting there quietly. One or two farmers were speaking to him. There was plenty of time for Prime Minister to come. We showed Dr. Kurien around and briefed him about preparation made by us. He was satisfied with the preparation and told us that when the Prime Minister arrives, he would welcome him, and all other briefing and discussion would be done by NDDDB officials. Dr. N.V. Belavadi was accompanying Prime Minister, and I was also showing Prime Minister where necessary about the activities of village co-operative.

For the first time I saw Shri. Atal Bihari Vajpayee from a near distance. He looked very fresh. His Hindi pronunciation was excellent. He wore white Dhoti and Kurta, and black sandals with white socks up to his knees. He had a very good personality, and looked like typical Dadaji. He sat with the management committee of DCS and discussed with them about various aspects of dairy management and was very satisfied. He listened carefully and grasped each and every activity of DCS. Dr. Kurien and Prime Minister discussed for some time, and that was how the visit was over.

When I look back after many years, I always ask myself why Dr. Kurien had chosen to be there at Napad village? The Prime Minister afterwards visited IRMA, Karamsad – the birth place of Vallabhbhai Patel, and his memorial and also visited NDDDB. Dr. Kurien could have visited and welcomed the Prime Minister in any of those places, more over nobody would have raised objection. But rather, he selectively chose Napad village. He had chosen that place because milk producers were there, and he always felt that entire NDDDB and AMUL structure was created for those milk producers.

The visit at Napad was most important because at that place, Dr. Kurien was able to show snapshot of what India would achieve in future to Shri. Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

Dr. Kurien – His fag end days in NDDDB

I was posted in NDDDB, Anand during the period from 1997 to 2000. Those were crucial days because Dr. Kurien would soon relinquish his post and would move on in his life. At that time, Dr. Miss. Amrita Patel was Managing Director of NDDDB, and she used to conduct meetings with delegates approaching Dr. Kurien for discussions regarding funding to different states under Perspective Plan. Such meetings were usually conveyed in Shastri Board Room.

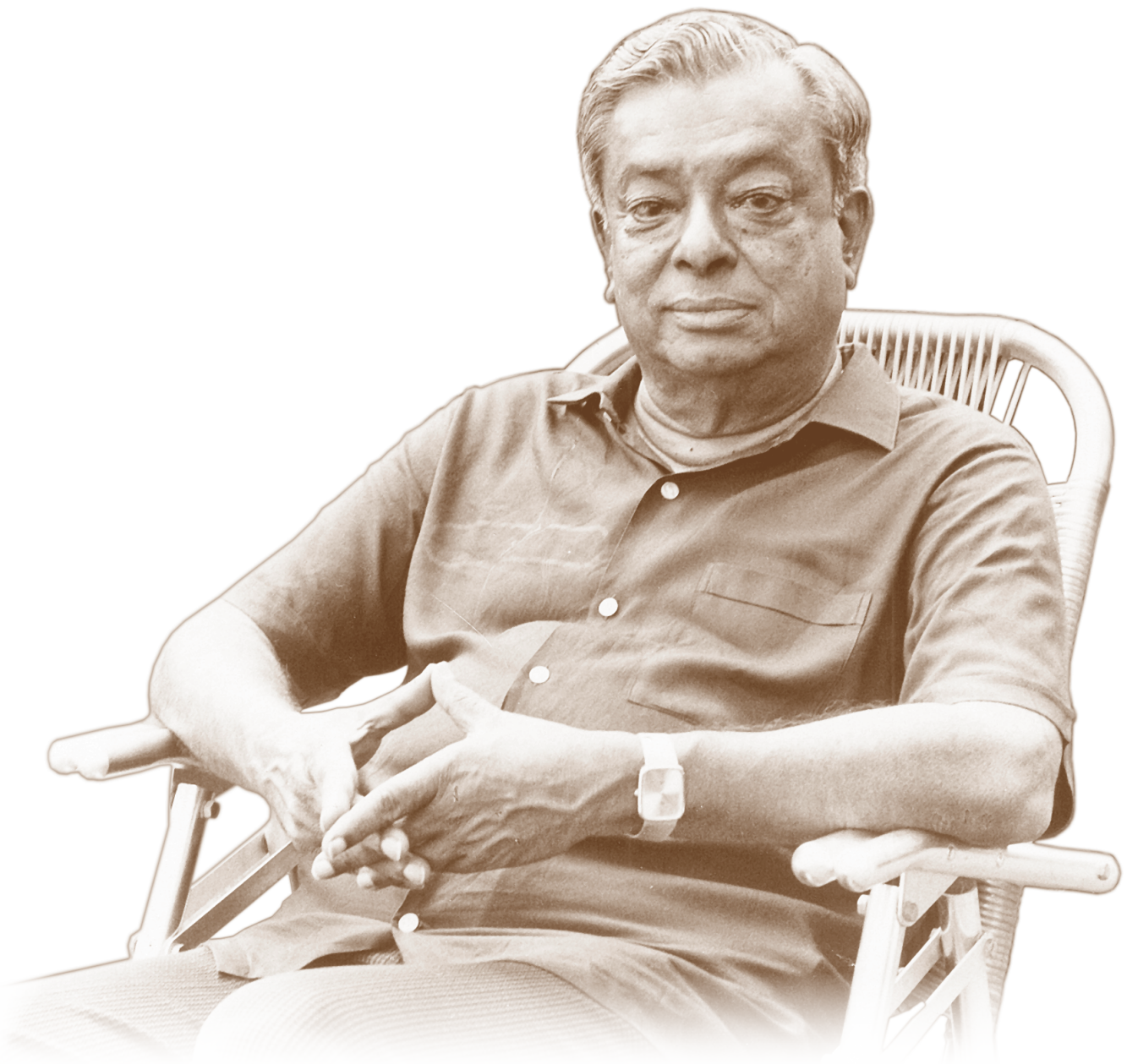
On one such occasion, I was called to attend the meeting regarding funding for Karnataka State. The Chairman, and Managing Director of KMF were sitting on the front side and on the other side was Dr. Kurien and to his left was Dr. Miss. Amrita Patel, and on right side, I was sitting. As Dr. Kurien was growing old, he used to sit for the meeting for longer period of time and used to speak more freely than what he used to do earlier. Probably, because of various reasons, he was finding more time and his attitude was more relaxed.

The Operation Flood funding had come to an end. There was no easy money available with NDDDB. The expenditure on NDDDB's salary was around Rs. 55 crores and the repayment from the federation and milk unions was drying and had become trickle. That money was not enough for funding huge amount as per need of the federations. For

example, NDDB for the first time had to invoke Govt. guarantee for Assam to recover its loan. Therefore, Dr. Miss. Amrita Patel was very cautious about lending fresh funds to states.

Dr. Kurien was in the habit of taking fast decisions and did not like anybody going against his decision. On this occasion, he told Karnataka delegation that NDDB could offer funding up to Rs. 1000 crores. Miss. Patel started looking at senior officers sitting in the room. I could realize that something was wrong. She had all the respect for the Chairman and his words. Therefore, she did not say anything. But, she gently pressed the hand of Dr. Kurien below the table and I could see that. Dr. Kurien soon realized why she did so and he looked at her and told the delegates that though he promised to offer Rs. 1000 crores, Madam would see and examine your proposal. He also added that he was becoming old and let the decision be taken by the young generation.

This incident clearly shows the understanding between Chairman and Managing Director and the statesmanship of Dr. Kurien to quickly understand the situation and handle the occasion. As we all know, the Karnataka is a one such state where maximum funding has been provided by the NDDB and results are there for all of us to see.





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